

The University of Chicago

THE ROMANTIC IDEALISM OF ART
1800-1848

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF
THE HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

1933

By
MORTON DAUWEN ZABEL

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CHAPTER V
THE CRITICAL AND POPULAR BACKGROUND
1800 - 1848

The function and morality of art were problems not merely for the speculator and poet of the early Nineteenth Century, but for cultivated English society generally. The spokesmen of the new esthetics had been schooled in their duties by moral philosophers of the preceding century, but following the French Revolution the social need of art became more generally apparent than ever. In criticism, popular journalism, esthetic propaganda, and formal speculation, anticipations appeared of the social and economic rationalization of art which eventually culminated in the doctrines of Ruskin. The situation in which Blake, Coleridge, and Wordsworth found themselves was shared by men in humbler ways of life, to whom the critics and academic officials of the day endeavored to communicate the ideals and benefits of esthetic pleasure. It was a half-century of confusing transitions - political, industrial, and religious. "Yet never," as Professor Thorndike has said, "has beauty been more ardently sought."¹ The history of English taste and esthetic revival, particularly as expressed by contemporary criticism and journalism, cannot be written in full here, but a selection from its documents is necessary in order to show the spiritual and social atmosphere in which poets and moralists of art in the Romantic period advanced their principles. Out of a confusion of sentiments and vogues English

¹Ashley H. Thorndike, Literature in a Changing Age (New York, 1920), 288.

critics were attempting to rescue the ideal upon which a complete esthetic morality for the future might be based. Their efforts were intensified both by the oppressive confusion of taste permitted to a rapidly democratized society, and by the liberties of a new eclecticism. In an age of changing values a few men saw vividly, if not clearly, their opportunity to enlighten with beauty the darkening prospect of England's industrial and moral future.

1

Charles Lamb, writing in 1816 on the "Barrenness of the Imaginative Faculty in the Productions of Modern Art," expressed something of the pessimism with which modern critics look back upon English painting during the early Nineteenth Century, but for a different reason. This essay, included in the Last Essays of Elia, presents a mixture of sound esthetic feeling with confused esthetic attitude that is in many ways characteristic of an age which witnessed the conflict between traditional classicism and insurgent romanticism in art, and which attempted to reconcile the two by such styles as "the picturesque" and the "historical." Lamb approached the contemporary perplexity with the knowledge that Hogarth had for a moment corrected by realism and sound craftsmanship the artificial tendencies of the preceding century. But:

"Hogarth excepted, can we produce any one painter within the last fifty years, or since the humour of exhibiting began, that has treated a story imaginatively? By this we mean, upon whom his subject has so acted, that it has seemed to direct him - not to be arranged by him? Any upon whom its leading or collateral points have impressed themselves so tyrannically, that he dared not treat it otherwise, lest he should falsify a revelation? Any that has imparted to his compositions, not merely so much truth as is enough to convey a story with clearness, but that individualising property, which should keep the subject so treated distinct in feature from every other subject, however similar, and to common

apprehensions almost identical; so as that we might say, this and that part could have found an appropriate place in no other picture in the world but this?"²

This enquiry of Lamb's fairly defines the problem of Romantic art in England. The critical disorder of the time is amply shown in it. It was the day of the subject-picture; a purely intellectual concern with design and form was largely unimagined by critics and painters, despite Reynolds' emphasis on the importance of "general nature" a generation earlier. Thus Lamb debates the virtues and defects of English art purely from the viewpoint of subject-treatment by painters. He finds no English painter the equal of Titian, of Raphael, of Poussin, and of Veronese, specimens of whose work he analyzes, and even a "grotesque, fantastic" Dryad by Julio Romano shows how, "to the lowest subjects, and, to a superficial comprehension, the most barren, the Great Masters gave [a] loftiness and fruitfulness" which English painters had rarely achieved.³

Lamb makes two charges, and offers two remedies. Neither of them appeals to modern criticism as a curative of the ailments with which Romantic art was encumbered, and, in the sense in which Lamb intended them, neither seems to define (except negatively) the actual misconceptions in the art of his time. He first charged that "there is a cowardice in modern art."⁴ If this accusation had been directed against the formal poverty of contemporary painting it might still be accepted as valid, but Lamb was complaining of a dearth of the grandeurs and terrors from which the work of his contemporaries, Haydon, Louthembourg, and Turner, now seems to have suffered only by excess. Lamb wanted the imagination

²Charles Lamb, "Barrenness of the Imaginative Faculty in the Productions of Modern Art," in The Last Essays of Elia (New York, 1919), 149-50.

³Ibid., 161.

⁴Ibid., 161.

to bring to painting a suggestive magnificence equal to that of the Renaissance; his intuition may have told him that the Renaissance masters achieved such magnificence through a mastery of certain esthetic problems which his own technical knowledge had not yet grasped, but he seems to have believed that the entire problem is one of pictorial illusion.

"By a wise falsification, the great masters of painting got at their true conclusions; by not showing the actual appearances, that is, all that was to be seen at any given moment by an indifferent eye, but only what the eye might be supposed to see in the doing or suffering of some portentous action. Suppose the moment of the swallowing up of Pompeii. There they were to be seen - houses, columns, architectural proportions, differences of public and private buildings, men and women at their standing occupations, the diversified thousand postures, attitudes, dresses, in some confusion truly, but physically they were visible. But what eye saw them at that eclipsing moment, which reduces confusion to a kind of unity, and when the senses are upturned from their proprieties, when sight and hearing are a feeling only? A thousand years have passed, and we are at leisure to contemplate the weaver fixed standing at his shuttle, the baker at his oven, and to turn over with antiquarian coolness the pots and pans of Pompeii."⁵

Such "wise falsification" he found lacking not in "modern art alone; but in ancient, where only it is to be found if anywhere.... from defect of this imaginative faculty,"⁶ and he hopes that modern art will rescue itself from the sterile formalism which blighted the classical. Raphael was able to take "the humble craft of the shipbuilder," in his "Building of the Ark," and endow it with beauty, whereas to the modern painter

"The dock-yards at Woolwich would object derogatory associations. The depot at Chatham would be the mote and the beam in its intellectual eye. But not to the nautical preparations in the shipyards of Civita Vecchia did Raphael look for instructions, when he imagined the Building of the Vessel that was to be conservatory of the wrecks of the species of drowned mankind."⁷

⁵Ibid., 158-9.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., 161.

Unfortunately, Lamb helped matters very little when he pointed out an obvious truth: "Artists....err in the confounding of poetic with pictorial subjects."⁸ For Lamb implies by this criticism, not that the poetic has no place in painting, but that, since in pictorial subjects "the exterior accidents are nearly everything, the unseen qualities as nothing," an artist's mind must be "deeply corporealised, and enchained hopelessly in the grovelling fetters of externality," which cannot see that the valid pictorial subject must be enlivened by the same kind of imagination as is trusted to extract higher truth and beauty from a poetic theme.⁹ If it is not, Don Quixote (then in "every season held up at our Exhibitions") will remain a farcical theme for painters, instead of remaining the noble and complex knight of Cervantes' romance. It was not literary irrelevance that troubled Lamb in contemporary painting; it was the conventional banality and artificiality to which such irrelevance was reduced that made him see decay in the art around him. Had such irrelevance disappeared altogether, it is likely that he would have considered the art of painting in a state of hopeless and irremediable decline. For the contributions of painters like Constable, Blake, and Bonington to actual form in painting, neither he nor most of his contemporaries seems to have paid great attention or respect.

11

Lamb's distress reveals the extent to which sentimental association had claimed the attention of painters in his time, and also the extent to which they were falling short of its demands. By 1815 such association had come to occupy as great a

⁸Ibid., 162.

⁹Ibid., 162.

place as "nature" in the subject-matter of painting, and with "nature" it separated the new philosophy of art from that of the classical tradition. When formalism was rejected from esthetic criteria, artists faced once more the problem of deciding the relevance and availability of nature to art. We have seen how Blake, Coleridge, and Wordsworth represent the different ways in which Reynolds' idealism of natural form was repudiated; but none of these repudiations agreed as to how nature was once more to be assimilated to the purposes of art. There was, however, one popular compromise on this problem: the vogue of the picturesque. When Du Fresnoy gave European popularity to classical doctrines in De Arte Graphica in 1665, he emphasized the two elements around which contention on art was to center for almost two centuries. Du Fresnoy, and most neo-classicists following him until after Reynolds' time, (a) rejected nature in any but a "circumspect" form and (b) recommended that "belle-nature" can best be learned through classical imitation, not through independent vision. But as if to reconcile painters to the loss of their personal liberties with nature, he recommended, in addition to subject-matter of heroic, classical, and nationalistic derivations, the value of literary themes to the painter.¹⁰ Thereby the ancient doctrine of "Ut pictura poesis" was once more revived. During the next century, while nature, as an esthetic "norm," became more and more rigorously subdued to imitative reproduction or to the anti-Dutch "generalization" which Reynolds recommended, the vogue of literary and narrative subject-matter increased.¹¹ This vogue, prompted

¹⁰Cf. William Guild Howard's outline of this revival in "Ut Pictura Poesis," PMLA, XXIV (n.s.XVII) (1909), 40-123.

¹¹The categories of nature in esthetic usage of the Eighteenth Century are classified in A. O. Lovejoy's "Nature as an Aesthetic Norm," MLN, XLII, 444 ff.

by Du Fresnoy's dictum, slowly counteracted the inhibiting effect of the classical doctrine of imitation, until it gave rise to the phenomenon of "picturesque" beauty that flourished in Italy, France, and England for almost two centuries. It remains, along with the "return to nature," one of two basic elements in what is now generally branded as "the romantic fallacy."¹² Literary and historical subject-matter allowed "the poetic interest of distant civilization to supplant the esthetic interest of form," but nature likewise was soon found to supply "those qualities which romanticism seeks....[The] strange, fantastic, unexpected, terrible."¹³ Geoffrey Scott has defined the community of meaning which Romantic pictorial artists found in the literary past and in the new nature of late Eighteenth Century Romantic painting:

"Like the past, Nature is remote. Indifferent to human pre-occupations and disowning human agency, Nature possesses all the more forcibly an imaginative appeal.... Nature's considered variety became the very type and criterion of beauty, and men were led by an inevitable consequence to value what is various, irregular, or wild, and to value it wherever it might be found. As in the cult of the past, so, too, in this cult of the 'natural,' it was literature, the true instrument of the Romantic Movement, that led the way."¹⁴

Such combinations of literary theme with picturesque nature first became popular in the landscapes of Nicholas and Gaspar Poussin, Claude Gelee, and Salvator Rosa. The success of these painters in their own countries was followed by phenomenal popularity in England, where a generation of artists claimed descent from them, and where connoisseurs of the rank of Sir George Beaumont, Wordsworth's friend, were active in bringing quantities of picturesque

¹²For a history of this vogue see Christopher Hussey's The Picturesque, Studies in a Point of View (London, 1927), to which later reference will be made as 'Hussey.'

¹³Cf. "The Romantic Fallacy" in Geoffrey Scott's The Architecture of Humanism (New York, 1926), 37-94, for the relation of romantic painting and architecture to the formal idealism of the Renaissance.

¹⁴Scott, Ibid., 66.

art into England.¹⁵ For a number of years this art was without its apologists. But when Burke published his Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful in 1756, he provided the suggestion which gave opportunity to critics and painters left dissatisfied by his two-fold division of esthetic pleasure. Thus the enthusiasm for picturesque beauty which was already a quarter of a century old when Burke's Inquiry appeared, and which during the middle years of the century stimulated writers as different as Thomas Gray, Horace Walpole, the Bishop of Bangor Dr. Herring, Lady Hertford, Mrs. Elizabeth Montague, and Lord Lyttleton, at last found its apologists.¹⁶ In the course of the next seventy years (between Gilpin's Essay on Prints of 1769, the first formal definition of picturesque beauty, and Sir Thomas Dick Lauder's defense of Uvedale Price in 1842) an extensive critical literature on the picturesque was produced, and represents the general esthetic atmosphere in which Charles Lamb's and his contemporaries' ideas on landscape were developed.

Burke did not discuss or define the picturesque, but he left a loop-hole for its insertion in his scheme of esthetic values. His Inquiry laid down two opposites, pleasure and pain (or fear), as the bases of all esthetic value. From pleasure derives Beauty; from pain or fear, in which he defined also a species of pleasure, derives the Sublime. The qualities of beauty are those of subdued and "gentlized" nature, and he enumerated them as seven:

¹⁵This vogue in England has been fully described by Elizabeth Wheeler Manwaring in Italian Landscape in Eighteenth Century England (New York, 1925), hereafter referred to as "Manwaring." Cf. especially Chapter VI, "The Creation of Italian Landscape in England," and Chapter VII, "The Cult of the Picturesque."

¹⁶Manwaring, 167-175.

"First, to be comparatively small. Secondly, to be smooth. Thirdly, to have a variety in the direction of the parts; but, fourthly, to have those parts not angular, but melted as it were into each other. Fifthly, to be of a delicate frame, without any remarkable appearance of strength. Sixthly, to have its colours clear and bright, but not very strong and glaring. Seventhly, or if it should have any glaring colour, to have it diversified with others."¹⁷

Against this, he set sublimity, whose basis is the terrifying, the gigantic, the fearful, deriving from the belief that

"No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear. For fear being an apprehension of pain or death, it operates in a manner that resembles actual pain. Whatever therefore is terrible, with regard to sight, is sublime too, whether this cause of terror be endued with greatness of dimensions or not; for it is impossible to look on anything as trifling, or contemptible, that may be dangerous.... Indeed, terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently, the ruling principle of the sublime...."¹⁸

The discrimination of beauty and sublimity he left to the cultivation of "the passions," the "primary pleasures of sense"; then to "the secondary pleasures of the imagination"; and finally to "the conclusions of the reasoning faculty," for thus it was that he analyzed the faculty of taste in man:

"....for as the senses are the great originals of all our ideas, and consequently of all our pleasures, if they are not uncertain and arbitrary, the whole ground-work of taste is common to all."¹⁹

To Gilpin, Burke's two categories were insufficient. They dealt too simply with the dichotomy of sensuous pleasure and pain, and reduced to too meagre a scope the esthetic satisfactions of which man is capable. The vogue of Poussin's and Rosa's landscapes had already made apparent the existence of a medial type of esthetic pleasure: one which mingles the beauty of subdued and modulated nature with some of the sensations of fear or terror derived from the sublime. Although Gilpin in his Essay upon Prints (subtitled

¹⁷Edmund Burke, Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful (London, 1776), 88.

¹⁸Ibid., 40-41.

¹⁹Ibid., 14 ff.

as concerning "the Principles of Picturesque Beauty") did not advance far beyond defining the picturesque as "that kind of beauty which would look well in a picture,"²⁰ he began the investigation of such beauty on a systematic scale, and instigated what is actually an important aspect of the reconciliation of antinomies in esthetic philosophy during the next fifty years.

Gilpin's writings on picturesque beauty were voluminous. He had begun formulating his opinions ten or more years before he issued, in 1768, the Essay upon Prints which acts as a preface to the long series of "essays," "observations," "remarks," etc., which kept appearing until well into the Nineteenth Century.²¹ He explored England, Wales, Scotland, and the Isle of Wight in search of picturesque landscape, and under the encouragement of such friends as William Mason, translator of Du Fresnoy and authority on gardening, Samuel Pratt, the historian Mitford, Horace Walpole, and the Duchess of Portland, he published many volumes, and illustrated what he published with aquatint plates. There is nothing of romantic disorder and ruggedness in Gilpin's scenery. The immense panoply of nature must not, he held, confuse or overpower man. Man is a limited being. He is "confined to a span;

²⁰William Gilpin, Essay upon Prints (London, 1768), 12.

²¹Gilpin's most important works of this kind are (with titles somewhat shortened): Observations on the River Wye and several Parts of South Wales....relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty (London, 1782); Observations on....the Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmorland (1786); Observations on Several Parts of Great Britain, particularly the Highlands of Scotland (1789); Observations on Forest Scenery (1791); Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; On Sketching Landscape. To Which is added a Poem on Landscape Painting (1792); Observations on the Western Parts of England.... (1798); Observations on the Coasts of Hampshire, Sussex, and Kent (1804); Observations on....the Counties of Cambridge, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex.... Also on several Parts of North Wales (1809). Gilpin died in 1804; the last two of these works were published posthumously.

"and lays down his little rules, which he calls the principles of picturesque beauty, merely to adapt such diminutive parts of nature's surface to his own eye as come within its scope. Hence, therefore, the painter who adheres strictly to the composition of nature, will rarely make a good picture."²²

Such adherence tends too much toward the irregularity and over-emphasis of romanticism; the picturesque should retain the order and nicety of classicism; not "odd, misshapen, and uncouth" but recognizable, orderly, and inoffensive in its pictorial appropriateness. He developed an elaborate set of formulae for tasteful landscape, and gives prescriptions whereby rivers, side-screens of trees, the "blasted tree-trunk" authorized by Rosa, rocks, lights, characters "such as impress us with some idea of greatness, wildness, or ferocity" in "long, flowing draperies" like "gypsies; banditti; and soldiers," plains, heights, and roadways may be distributed over a landscape in order to produce the kind of picturesqueness required.²³ These elements Gilpin reduced to set rule. As Hussey has said:

"The picturesque method of composing a landscape by selecting and combining objects necessitated clear ideas as to what was and was not picturesque. So in his Tour to the Lakes Gilpin made an Analysis of Romantic Scenery or, in other words, a collector's list of features suitable for inclusion in a picture. For this purpose he divided every view into three parts: Background, containing Mountains and Lakes; Off-skip, comprising Valleys, Woods, Rivers; Foreground, comprising Rocks, Cascades, Broken Ground, and Ruins."²⁴

Since these properties varied in picturesque effectiveness, Gilpin had the limitations and excellences of each carefully defined. And he went so far as to describe the special features of different species of tree, mountain, and rock, his emphasis always being on the degree to which these avoided undue violence, exaggeration, and wildness, for he kept clearly in mind the differentiation of

²²Observations on the River Wye.... (London, 1782), 30-1.

²³Manwaring, 186-7.

²⁴Hussey, 115-116.

picturesqueness from sublimity.²⁵ So detailed and methodical was his inventory of nature for the purposes of setting up a new (and ultimately vastly successful) vogue in painting, that he became the acknowledged leader of the cult, and won, besides the homage of such disciples as Alison, Knight, Price, and Lauder, such immortality as resides in being the original of William Combe's famous Doctor Syntax, whose Tour....in Search of the Picturesque, of 1812, was the beginning of a series of cutting satires on the artificial doctrines which Gilpin had spent his life in perfecting and broadcasting.²⁶

Gilpin's labors continued until his death in 1804 and his works continued to appear until 1810, but meanwhile an even more impressive defense of picturesque beauty had appeared in the books of Uvedale Price, who became a baronet the year before his death in 1829. Price also realized the inadequacy of Burke's bipartite division of esthetic value. He had no wish to cope with Burke's moral and social conception of sublimity, but at the same time he could not accept Burke's limitation of beauty to aspects of smoothness in nature:

"As, notwithstanding the various and striking lights in which Mr. Burke has placed all that relates to beauty, and the very close and convincing analogies he has drawn from the other senses to show how much smoothness is essential to it, that position has been doubted.... One principal effect of smoothness, and to which perhaps it owes its so general power of pleasing, is, that it gives an appearance of quiet and repose

²⁵The transition from sublimity to picturesqueness is fully analyzed in Hussey, 110-124.

²⁶Combe's satire is clearly based on Gilpin's works, and his other comic poems include a series of heroic epistles, one of them, Heroic Epistle to Sir Joshua Reynolds, having lampooned academic officers and doctrines as represented in the Discourses. For an account of Combe's satires and a "Bibliographical List," see John Camden Hotten's preface to his edition of Doctor Syntax's Three Tours: In Search of the Picturesque, Consolation, and a Wife (with the illustrations after T. Rowlandson) (London: John Camden Hotten, Piccadilly; n.d.).

to all objects; roughness, on the contrary, a spirit and animation. These seem to me likewise the most prevailing effects of the beautiful and the picturesque; these the means by which they generally operate, and if these premises are true, it will be just to conclude, that where there is a want of smoothness there is a want of repose, and consequently of beauty; and on the other hand, that where there is no roughness there is a want of spirit and stimulus, and consequently of picturesqueness."²⁷

And he attempted, in the manner of the day, to ascribe the appeal of roughness to psychological responses of satisfaction:

"Though it seems highly probable that broken and angular surfaces, both from sympathy and from real irritation of the organ, stimulate more than such as are smooth, yet the stimulus from whence the most constant and marked effects proceed, that which in a peculiar manner belongs to the picturesque, and distinguishes it from the beautiful, - arises principally from its two great characteristics, intricacy and variety, and produced by roughness and sudden deviation, and as opposed to the comparative monotony of smoothness and flowing lines."²⁸

He acknowledges his indebtedness to Burke, along with his improvement on him, when he said that

"the picturesque fills up a vacancy between the sublime and the beautiful, and accounts for the pleasure we receive from many objects on principles distinct from either, which objects should therefore be placed on a separate class."²⁹

Sir Walter Scott admired Price's Essay on the Picturesque as compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful which appeared in 1794 and created the greatest sensation yet inspired by the new cult; and said that the author had "converted the age to his views."³⁰ In any case, Price's reputation became everywhere recognized as that of the most dignified and subtle defender which picturesque

²⁷Uvedale Price, An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful; and on the Use of Studying Pictures, for the Purpose of Improving Landscape (London, 1894), 101-3.

²⁸Ibid., 103 f.

²⁹Ibid., 102.

³⁰Oliver Elton, English Literature, 1780-1830, I, 422.

Scott's article was published in the Westminster Review for March 1828 - a discussion of landscape gardening and picturesque beauty.

beauty had won, and his praises for Rosa and Claude delighted connoisseurs who had already favored those masters. Moreover, his idea that there is a realm of esthetic pleasure close to sublimity, yet not dependent on sublimity's inspiration to fear, was bound to appeal to a wide audience in a period when polite sentiment was a criterion of artistic enjoyment. There was a large audience for pictures which inspired "fear and awe softened into pity and sentimental regard," and likewise for "that disposition of objects, which, by a partial and uncertain concealment, excites and nourishes curiosity."³¹ The elements of intricacy, "sudden variation," and mystery which Price ascribed to the picturesque, brought it to bear heavily upon the Gothic taste which had been manifesting itself for over a half-century in England and which was presently to produce in England a revival of Gothic styles surpassing any of the Eighteenth Century attempts to bring this kind of beauty back to English cities, gardens, and pictures.³² Price made the picturesque respectable. He took it out of the specialized and practical field which, in Gilpin, had offered chief appeal to painters; and he related it to current standards of taste. He brought it, moreover, into a close relationship with the work of Eighteenth Century poets of nature, with writers of Italianate romances, and with the tradition of sentimental and historical morality which had occupied an important place in the early verse of Wordsworth, as well as in that of Goldsmith, Cowper, Crabbe, Mason, Gray, and Collins.³³ He increased his popularity

³¹Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, *Price on the Picturesque, An Essay on the Origin of Taste* (London, 1842), 69.

³²Cf. A. O. Lovejoy, "The First Gothic Revival and the Return to Nature," *MLN*, XLVII (1932), 419-46; and Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival, An Essay in the History of Taste* (London, 1928), Chapter I, "The Survival of Gothic," 1-25; and Chapter III, "Ruins and Rococo," 50-76.

³³See Chapter IV above; and Manwaring, Chapter V, "Italian Landscape in English Poetry in the Eighteenth Century," 95-121.

by relating the laws of picturesque beauty to those of gardening. In this department of esthetic pleasure he gets farthest away from the Eighteenth Century ideal of formal beauty, which, elsewhere in his writings, remains a basic doctrine. Price's theory of taste held for the uniformity of this type of judgment, in this sense deriving from those efforts at standardizing taste which had appeared in the empiricists (Hume especially) before him.

Price's ideas did not gain circulation without meeting opposition. In the same year that his Essays on the Picturesque appeared (1794-5) two other works were published, Payne Knight's The Landscape, a didactic poem addressed to Price, and Humphry Repton's Sketches and Hints of Landscape Gardening.³⁴ A controversy grew up chiefly around the rights of landscape painters to dictate the laws of landscape gardening. Knight, like his friend Price, believed that they should. Repton, one of the most ingenious gardeners and landscape planners of the day, believed they should not. Knight's poem gave elaborate directions on the composition of landscapes, and generally follows Gilpin's prescriptions in allowing ruins, properly clothed characters (bandits, gypsies, etc.), and buildings to play their part in the scene. But Repton, being a practical architect, held out against the belief of Price and Knight that picturesqueness is as appropriate to actual life as it is to art. He held that it is the duty of art to deceive, and quoted Burke: "No work of art can be great

³⁴Besides The Landscape in 1794, Knight published An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste (London, 1805), deriving largely from Blake in an effort to adjust his ideas to those of picturesqueness. Repton published, besides the Sketches and Hints of 1795, Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening (London, 1803); An Inquiry into the Changes of Taste in Landscape Gardening (1806); Designs for the Pavilion, Brighton (1808); and Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, with John Adey Repton (1816).

but as it deceives. To be otherwise is the prerogative of nature only." The gardener must confine himself to three "distances": (1) the scene that it is in his power to improve, (2) that which he can prevent being injured by artificial means, and (3) that which is beyond his control. In other words, he opposed the notion that picturesqueness is practical, either in gardening or in life, and he may have lent suggestions to Peacock who later satirized the fanaticism of picturesque-lovers in Headlong Hall.³⁵ Repton seems to have felt a distaste for the artificial extremes to which the new vogue was to be pushed. From his position as a practical gardener, he saw that a new tyranny was descending on English taste. He had already improved on the elaborate formulations of garden-art that Launcelot ("Capability") Brown had perfected in the preceding century,³⁶ and had no wish to see a new mass of dogmas encumber the treatment of landscape. Uvedale Price believed that "all types of garden must be judged by the universal principles of painting." Repton, while respecting many of Brown's principles (the use of avenues, terraces, perspectives, etc.) and agreeing with Price and Knight on their adaptation to modern needs, would not allow that these principles depend on the usage of landscape-painters. In his Inquiry into the Changes of Taste in Landscape Gardening, of 1806, he forecasts the gradual divorcing of gardening and landscape painting which was to come during the next twenty-five years.³⁷

That divorce, however, was not achieved easily. The doctrines of Price and Knight were vigorously defended, particularly by two disciples, John Claudius Loudon, who issued a long series

³⁵Hussey, 172-176.

³⁶Cf. Manwaring, 140 ff.

³⁷Cf. Hussey, Chapter V, "Garden Scenes," 128 ff.

of books justifying the practical adaptation of picturesque principles in architecture and gardening between 1800 and 1840,³⁸ and Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, whose Price on the Picturesque in 1842 attempted to reconcile the doctrines of Price with those of the empirical school of taste. Knight and Price themselves failed to agree in all particulars; after 1800 Knight advocated the use of less formalistic, more impressionistic methods in developing landscape, while Price adhered to more discreet classicism in his notions of picturesque beauty. Price, in other words, remained faithful to the art of Claude and Rosa which had first inspired him; Knight, although he owned at Downton Castle one of the finest collections of Claude's drawings in England, found their routine severity too limited, and began to preach that respect for "poetic" feeling in art which Charles Lamb also desired, and which the paintings of Turner were soon to exemplify. As Ladd remarks, Turner's early work would have pleased Price, but his later "would have illustrated the tendency of Knight's principles" even though it is unlikely that Knight "could have approved of them."³⁹

Price's importance lies in his defining more concisely and effectively than Gilpin the exact nature of the picturesque as an esthetic category. Repton's value consists in his tendency to limit the dissemination of picturesque principles, and to object, on practical grounds, that the ideals of a landscape art are inapplicable to the uses of actual living conditions and moral pleasure. Knight's contribution is somewhat more significant than either of these, for he attempted to bring picturesque beauty into

³⁸The most important are Observations on Ornamental Plantations and on Landscape Gardening (Edinburgh, 1804), and An Encyclopaedia of Gardening (London, 1822).

³⁹Henry Ladd, The Victorian Morality of Art (New York, 1932), 359. Cf. Hussey, 69-81.

line with the early Nineteenth Century standards of taste.

In doing so, he placed himself under debt to Archibald Alison. Alison's Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste were, indeed, a work of standard importance in England for almost half a century after their publication in 1790. His theory of association, which had developed out of Eighteenth Century empirical esthetics and showed affinities with similar suggestions in the work of Adam Smith, Hartley, Hume, Gerard, and Kames, has already been discussed here (Chapter I), in relation to the inductive methods of critical writers after Burke. Gerard particularly suggests the possible source of Alison's immensely popular and influential doctrines. Alison, and Knight following him, are to be credited with carrying the associational psychology farther than any of their eminent predecessors had taken it. Alison accepted Burke's categories, but added to them the notion that emotions either of beautiful or sublime origin carry with them "interesting or affecting qualities" which stimulate the imagination to "the prosecution of a train of thought."⁴⁰ These trains of thought are composed of associations possessing "a uniform principle of connection through the whole of the train." Thus these associations are unified in both their objective and sentimental qualities. If these associations are harmonious and pleasing, their source may be called beautiful; if not, the source lacks beauty. Works of art should perfectly illustrate this ability of external objects to stimulate unified and harmonious emotional associations.

"That composition is most excellent in which the different parts most fully unite in the production of one unmingled

⁴⁰ Archibald Alison, Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste (London, 1819), I, "Essay I," Conclusion.

emotion, and that taste is most perfect where the perception of this relation of objects, in point of expression, is most delicate and precise."⁴¹

This precise and delicate expression constitutes taste. Alison's next claim is that beauty does not exist in the source of such stimulation alone; it exists throughout the entire train of association, in the complete thought process, thus stimulated. Such a process is distinct from ordinary pleasure. In such ordinary pleasure "feeling follows immediately the presence of the object or quality, and has no dependence upon anything for its perfection but the sound state of the sense by which it is received." But the esthetic emotion, the emotion of taste, is dependent on the exercise of the imagination, and on the ability of the mind to establish unity among the associations called forth. The simple pleasure of perception has become complicated by the subtleties of the human sensibility, and, the range of such subtleties and associations being almost unlimited, that mind has the greatest esthetic capacities which is able to control the most comprehensive and delicate train of associations.

Alison classified associations as of two kinds: those that are directly instinctive, and those of an indirect character, rising out of environmental influences. He classified both categories, the second one being especially large. But he was not content that such sources be purely mechanistic stimuli of esthetic emotion; they include the possibility of spiritual and moral influence or sanction. The

"beauty and sublimity of such objects is to be ascribed, not to the material qualities themselves, but to the qualities they signify. And, of consequence, that the qualities of matter are not to be considered as sublime or beautiful in themselves, but as being the signs or expressions of such

⁴¹Ibid.

qualities as, by the constitution of our nature, are fitted to produce pleasing or interesting Emotion."⁴²

Alison's conclusions tended to show that taste is relative, a matter of environmental influences and training, and that there is no fixed objective beauty in matter. But to this characteristic empirical conclusion he added the idea that in our moral nature there exists a fixed basis for all esthetic discrimination. He wished to show that natural beauty and landscape art inspire a transcendental emotion which has its root in man's moral character, and that the associations thus stimulated inevitably include moral and humanitarian relevance. Wordsworth's conclusions regarding his own acquaintance with beauty and sublimity in landscape (in such a poem as the "Elegiac Stanzas") bring him to the same position regarding the connection of esthetic with moral sanctions; but where Alison adds rather tentatively the idea of moral sanction to his doctrine of esthetic taste, Wordsworth makes the connection between the two emphatic and indisputable.

Payne Knight went to Alison for his argument on the subjective character of beauty, sublimity, and picturesqueness (Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste, 1805). There he maintained also that picturesque beauty especially lends itself to associational pleasure, but any other type of beauty must yield such pleasure.

"This very relation to painting, expressed in the word picturesque, is that which affords the whole pleasure derived from association; which can, therefore only be felt by persons, who have correspondent ideas to associate; that is, by persons in a certain degree conversant with that art. Such persons, being in the habit of viewing, and receiving pleasure from fine pictures, will naturally feel pleasure in viewing those objects in nature, which have called forth those powers of imitation."⁴³

⁴²Ibid., "Essay III," Conclusion. The italics here are mine.

⁴³Payne Knight, Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste (London, 1805), 30.

Thus to Knight the picturesque was in the end merely a mode of vision. The sole property in such paintings which affords abstract pleasure, free of associations, is color. All the other properties of picturesque art were, for Knight, important solely because of their power to call forth "trains of thought" in the mind of the beholder. And such trains could not be conjured up in a mind undisposed, through lack of previous acquaintance with picturesque significances, to see the properties in their true light. All the pleasures of the picturesque (excepting that of color)

"....are from the minds of the spectators; whose pre-existing trains of ideas are revived, refreshed, and reassociated by new, but correspondent, impressions on the organs of sense, and the great and fundamental error which prevails throughout the otherwise able and elegant 'Essays on the Picturesque' is seeking for distinctions in external objects, which only exist in the modes and habits of viewing and considering them."⁴⁴

He believed that his friend Price had fallen victim to "the brilliant, but absurd and superficial, theories" of Burke, and like Burke had mistaken subjective associations for objective qualities. Thus Knight, after having accepted in his earlier works the categories of Beauty, Sublimity, and Picturesqueness, ended by repudiating them. Esthetic value does not rely upon such categories. It resides in the instinctive or educated sensibility of the beholder which is capable of adding to properties of any category the associations that make those properties significant. The sense of taste is subjective; it depends on man's power to attach to the objects of his vision the meaning that will make those objects beautiful or ugly; the most salient meanings derive from moral judgment; and finally, it is in pictures in which such judgment or sanction is most forcibly stimulated that the greatest beauty may be said to lie. Knight's influence was

⁴⁴Ibid.

to deflect interest from mere "composed" picturesqueness to those traits in painting which invite and promote the most salutary association. He materially aided the shift in popularity from picturesque art to the art of moral sentiment, sensuous impressionism, and dramatic or historical allegory. In his pages one sees the decline of the picturesque ideal, and the appearance in its place of pioneer impressionism in the work of John Constable, Thomas Girtin, Richard P. Bonington, and William Turner, and of allegorical morality in paintings by Haydon, Brown, and ultimately the Pre-Raphaelites. Under all varieties of fashion and taste lies a real and permanent principle of Beauty, a "standard of excellence which every generation of civilized man has uniformly recognized in theory."⁴⁵ This beauty exists in "harmonious but yet brilliant and contrasted combinations of light, shade, and color, blended but not confused, and broken but not cast into masses."⁴⁶ Color, most abstract of all esthetic elements in its appeal to the beholder, became for Knight the substance in which associations might become resolved and freed of ephemeral values. He broke from the picturesque tradition in order to make this pronouncement, and thus becomes one of the first prophets of the esthetic taste of the next generation.

Surrounding Knight were a number of minor students of art. William Thomson's Enquiry into the elementary Principles of Beauty, in the Works of Nature and Art, of 1798, is interesting chiefly because it divided Beauty up into more than the conventional three types by defining six "different accidents or elementary principles, each of which is a distinct beauty in itself, and consequently communicates a peculiar Beauty to every object to which

⁴⁵Ibid., 4.

⁴⁶Ibid., Part I, Chapter V, p. 68.

it is joined." This was one of the last efforts to specialize the appreciation of beauty before Knight's attempt to reduce categories to unimportance. "All beings," said Thomson,

"inanimate as well as animate, have one or more of these six beauties, and each of these elementary principles which is added after the first (which none are or can be without) increases its beauty by the addition of such element. It follows that the creature or element which possesses all the elementary principles is most or perfectly beautiful; while the creature or object which possesses only one element is least beautiful; and if there be any creature or object which possesses more it must be ugly, deformed, or monstrous."⁴⁷

The six principles he then enumerates are (1) beauty of proportion or fitness, (2) beauty of shape, (3) beauty of lines, (4) beauty of colors, (5) beauty of variety, and (6) beauty of smoothness. It is interesting to note that these include "fitness," an aspect of beauty inherited from Eighteenth Century associationalism in Hartley and Smith, and "variety." But for "variety" Thomson made no great claims, and so cannot be numbered among the notable defenders of picturesqueness:

"variety is not a definite element like the others, but an occasional mode or accident, by which the Beauty of the other elements is heightened or increased."⁴⁸

This is a tacit admission of the superficial quality of variety and picturesqueness, but Thomson's whole classification of beauties is so arbitrary and so purely a product of the artificial rationalization of his age, that his book may be safely said to possess "neither speculative nor literary merit to outlast its generation."⁴⁹

⁴⁷William Thomson, An Enquiry into the Elementary Principles of Beauty, in the Works of Nature and Art, to which is Prefixed an Introductory Discourse on Taste (London, 1798), 101-2.

⁴⁸Ibid., 182.

⁴⁹William Knight, The Philosophy of the Beautiful (New York, 1891), 193.

A more important contribution to current taste was that of Dugald Stewart, who published his essay "On the Beautiful" in his Philosophical Essays of 1810. Alison had been a student of Stewart's at Edinburgh and had already given expression to some of his teacher's ideas. Stewart may be associated with both Alison and Knight in his rejection of Burke's categories and of the special claims advanced for the picturesque. He argued that the sublime and the picturesque are merely "epithets to limit the meaning of the generic name 'Beauty' in particular instances," and that they always unite in landscape art "of highest effect."⁵⁰ Like Alison he argued for a moral and metaphysical basis for all esthetic pleasure, regardless of its specialized source. Thus he opposed Price's claims for the picturesque when he said that

"asperity, sharp angles, and irregularity are amongst the constituents of Beauty.... The meaning of the word Beauty, instead of being restricted, in conformity to any particular system whatsoever, should continue to be the generic word for expressing every quality which, in the works of either Nature or Art, contributes to render them agreeable to the eye."⁵¹

He also counteracted the vogue of picturesque beauty by saying that it depends upon artificial combinations or associations of elements for its effect, and that once those elements are dissociated, the beauty vanishes:

"amongst the elements which enter into the composition of the Beautiful, some are intrinsically pleasing, without reference to anything else; others please only in a state of combination.... The beauty of the former may be said to be absolute, or intrinsic; that of the latter [by which he means picturesque] to be only relative."⁵²

The picturesque is eminently suited to the purposes of a landscape painter, but "it is only when the beautiful and the picturesque

⁵⁰Dugald Stewart, Works, edited by W. Hamilton (London, 1877), "Essay on the Beautiful."

⁵¹Dugald Stewart, Philosophical Essays, "On the Beautiful" (London, 1810), 225.

⁵²Ibid., 228.

are united that a landscape painting produces its highest effect."⁵³ Stewart was opposed not only to the picturesque; he also had doubts about Association. Like Coleridge he saw that the office of association is to heighten the charm or appeal of scenes and objects, but never to create and realize them as art. It is a purely secondary function of the appreciative faculties.

"If there was anything originally and intrinsically beautiful, the associating principle would have no materials on which it could operate."⁵⁴

Thus Stewart, by a sensible skepticism, contributes toward the disintegration of artificial categories of taste (particularly in his two essays "On Taste" and "On the Culture of Habits Connected with Taste"), and finally referred all perception and appreciation of beauty to moral and religious sanctions, in both respects anticipating closely the initial efforts of Ruskin in reproving the traditions in esthetic against which his first publications were directed.⁵⁵

An important supplement to Stewart's work appeared in Sir George Stewart Mackenzie's Essay on some Subjects connected with Taste, in 1817. Mackenzie also felt the inadequacy of old ideas about beauty and sublimity. He opposed Stewart's idea that all Beauty originates in color and is then transferred, by analogy of pleasure, to other elements in art or nature. And while he agrees with Stewart that of itself Beauty is intangible, he does insist that there is "an internal faculty which judges and determines which perceptions are true of beauty, and which of ugliness."⁵⁶

⁵³Ibid., 234.

⁵⁴Ibid., 242.

⁵⁵Ruskin's derivations from the doctrines of sublimity and picturesqueness are discussed by Ladd, Op. cit., 132-9.

⁵⁶George Stewart Mackenzie, An Essay on Some Subjects connected with Taste (London, 1817), 20.

He argues that beauty does not reside in the objects of Nature or their qualities, but in the effects they produce.⁵⁷ And it is in these effects that the nature of beauty must be found, and the experiences it produces must be justified. He thus saw defects also in Alison's theory of association. It is not by relationships that the esthetic quality of objects is determined, but by "something in our minds which leads us to prefer certain forms, etc., to others."⁵⁸ For this "something" Mackenzie provided no name; it is simply his notion of an esthetic sense, and his implications tend to identify it with moral judgment.

A similar repudiation of both picturesqueness and associationism appeared some years later in McVicar of Moffat's essay On the Beautiful, the Picturesque, and the Sublime, of 1837. He joined Knight, Stewart, and Mackenzie in regarding these famous categories as artificial and misleading. There can be only one true source of beauty, and that must lie not in sense but "amongst the permanencies of our intellectual nature."⁵⁹ The emotion of the Beautiful "has the range of the whole mind."⁶⁰ He admitted that beauty may be intrinsic and objective, or purely subjective, but in any case it consists in the way in which elements have been composed into a harmony: "smoothness with regard to surface, and simplicity of ration with regard to structure."⁶¹ Only by such harmony of parts - a unified multitude similar to Coleridge's - will true beauty be brought into existence. There are, McVicar admits, deviations from pure beauty which are pleasing: "the most regularly beautiful countenances are usually the most inexpressive."

⁵⁷Ibid., 28.

⁵⁸Ibid., 161.

⁵⁹On the Beautiful, the Picturesque, and the Sublime
(Edinburgh, 1837), 11.

⁶⁰Ibid., 19.

⁶¹Ibid., 50.

Expressiveness usually demands a departure from formal unity. He himself preferred Salvator Rosa to Claude in this respect, but he considered Rosa an exponent of the beautiful in a different degree, not in a different sense, from Claude.⁶² Then in order to justify his belief that order, unity, and symmetry are the bases of all beauty, he developed a theory of the equilibrium to which all organic bodies attain. Beauty is not a creation of the mind; it is merely the mind's recognition of a correspondence between forms and compositions, and the normal order of nature. And this in turn led him to suggest a notion closely related to empathy. Our perception of the Beautiful in external objects originates in the symmetry and harmony of our own physical and intellectual organization. "The architecture of the mind's palace exhibits the lines of Beauty on all hands."⁶³ Thus once more the perception of beauty became allied to a response of sympathy and recognition in man's nature, and McVicar added to Knight's and Stewart's conception his corroboration of esthetic judgment as fixed in the intellectual character.

The last important plea for picturesqueness before Ruskin's disqualification of this category in Modern Painters came from Sir Thomas Dick Lauder. He wrote an essay on taste as a preface to his edition of Price on the Picturesque (1840). He hoped to rescue Price's theory of the picturesque from vulgarization by denying that external objects possess "inherent and invariable qualities of beauty, sublimity, and picturesqueness."⁶⁴ Were this so, all tastes would agree, since all would have uniform

⁶²Ibid., 69-73.

⁶³Ibid., 175.

⁶⁴Thomas Dick Lauder, Price on the Picturesque, with an Essay on the Origin of Taste (London, 1842), 2.

stimulus. But tastes do not agree; they vary, and must aim to vary in the direction of truth and quality, if there is to be any advance of taste in society. But responses to picturesque landscape, Lauder contended, are usually closer to truth, for such landscape has the power of reaching the heart of the beholder, and finding there associations (Lauder fell back on Alison's theory of association) that stamp such landscape as morally stimulating and beneficent.

"While the objects of the material world are made to attract our infant eyes, there are latent ties by which they reach our hearts; and whenever they afford us delight, they are always the signs or expressions of higher qualities by which our moral sensibilities are called forth."⁶⁵

"This," says Ladd, "is another fine example of how naturalistic ideas penetrated theories quite opposite to Ruskin, who had little use for the picturesque, and how all were seeking to give landscape a sanction thereby which religious subject matter once exclusively held."⁶⁶

Such religious sanction was the picturesque's last claim to value. Where once it had justified itself by stimulating peculiarly seductive and caressing pleasures in the spectator, - pleasures which avoid the passivity of mere beauty or the excessive stimulation of the sublime, - it now sought a longer claim on English taste by its moral reference or value. But by the time Lauder was writing, in the 1840's, the vogue of picturesque beauty had spent its force. Its claim to moral relevance was at best weak. A different kind of art - the anecdotal and the historical - was being produced, in which this relevance was unmistakable, and when that art appeared on the scene, the days of the picturesque were numbered.

⁶⁵Ibid., 48.

⁶⁶Ladd, Op. cit., 374.

Upon critics of more independent tendencies, the picturesque laid a strong influence. Their work improves on that of apologists for the cult, however, because it reflects more closely the eclectic and moralistic sympathies which were manifesting themselves in the Romantic period, and because most of them were more closely in touch with the popular viewpoint. The picturesque was no esoteric vogue; it represents a general taste in its day; but it developed out of literary and aristocratic interests and even in its more popular forms was not amenable to the sentimental uses which the new age demanded of art. A new and larger public for art was coming into existence. Between 1800 and 1840 the popular appreciation of art grew enormously in England. Connoisseurs could no longer claim the service of artists. Popular magazines, books, print shops, and newspapers were bringing esthetic ideals within reach of the middle-class man and woman. The aristocratic taste which had favored picturesqueness in landscape, gardening, and painting was slowly yielding to a popular demand for anecdotal, domestic, and morally edifying subject matter. Writers like Payne Knight, B. R. Haydon (in his letters to editors and other public pronouncements), Henry Fuseli, and Leigh Hunt were debating the uses of art in common life. Controversies of the type centering around the authenticity and public value of the Elgin marbles, in which Haydon played a conspicuous role (and for which Keats thanked him) were impressing Englishmen with the importance and dramatic interest of artistic issues. The exclusiveness of Eighteenth Century architectural styles was giving way to the enormous popular enthusiasm for the mediaeval which ushered in a new Gothic revival in both ecclesiastical and

domestic architecture. The rococo fragility of Strawberry Hill was supplanted by the hollow grandeurs of Fonthill Abbey and Ashridge, and these in turn by the endlessly adaptable Gothic fashions which, relying on the support of older Gothic sympathies which had been surreptitiously fostered in England ever since the Tudor style of the Sixteenth Century, made the careers of Augustus Welby Pugin, Wyatt, and Gilbert Scott triumphant. "Ecclesiology" and domestic mediaevalism were tastes that developed in the popular mind. They were encouraged by the widely read romances of novelists from Walpole's and Mrs. Radcliffe's day to Sir Walter Scott's. These tastes did not pride themselves on the exclusiveness which had clung to Italian landscape and to the picturesque at the height of their popularity. Critics had attempted to popularize these vogues by emphasizing their emotional delights, sentimental appeal, Biblical and historical atmosphere. But the public, finding more favor in these elements themselves than in the mere scenery embodying them, demanded art that would bring sentimental and moral splendors closer to their hearts than either Italian or picturesque landscape could. The grand style yielded to a more intimate one. The splendors of antique and Italian scenery gave way to a sort made familiar through religious association. Lofty scenery, with its "appropriate gypsies and banditti," was replaced by English, Welsh, and Scottish landscape, populated with well-known Biblical or domestic characters. Even the castellated splendors of Fonthill were gazed at from a respectable distance (the beholder always mindful that a coach-and-six might drive comfortably up the winding staircase of the great tower), and ultimately allowed to fall into disuse and collapse as being too remote from life for close inspection. But soon diminutive Fonthills were built in English villages and towns - cottages, villas, shops.

The rise of the middle-class reduced the vanity of the public's hope that all types of esthetic grandeur might be domesticated, and Pugin, in his Contrasts, scaled the architecture of mediaeval cathedrals and guild-halls down to the uses of garden-houses, suburban villas, lych-gates, chalet-cottages, and the public drinking-fountains ("conduits") of a market-square.

The controversy concerning the picturesque was a game for academic specialists and arbiters of elegance like Uvedale Price and Lauder. The merits of common art, and of great painters for common men, was a business for popular journalists and critics. On one hand ruled the officials of the Royal Academy - Barry, Opie, Fuseli - defending (with the occasional exception of Fuseli) the standards of classical imitation and academic taste. On the other appeared a new host of general writers - Hazlitt, Haydon, Hunt, Burnet, Allan Cunningham - who served a more general taste. These challenged the authority of the Academy. Haydon, like Blake before him, defied its officials to keep his art away from the public who liked it, and, denouncing them for slaves to academic fetishes, won out against their suspicions of the Elgin marbles. Archaeological investigation into both classic and mediaeval sources was reviving conflict between these schools of taste; but the mediaeval won. Between 1818 and 1833, the government, abandoning the tradition of Sir Christopher Wren, built 174 Gothic churches. With this activity there appeared a corresponding revival of religious and liturgical enthusiasm which culminated in July 1833 when, according to Newman's statement, Keble's assize sermon at St. Mary the Virgin's began the Tractarian movement. Another expanding interest claimed the public mind. Nature, long restored to poetry and rehabilitated in fiction and art, became an "esthetic norm" for the common man as well. Gilpin's exhaustive

inventory of natural beauties was succeeded by semi-scientific explorations into British landscape, of which Gilbert White's Natural History of Selborne (1798) is the prototype. Topographical painters like George Moreland, J. R. Cozens, William Alexander, Peter de Wint, and Samuel Scott ransacked the delights of English scenery, no longer for its formal and elegant properties, but for its agricultural and domestic beauties. The purely picturesque and sublime fell into disfavor. When Constable, Girtin, and Farington painted it, it was already past its heyday. When Turner gave it its last notable interpretation, his genius was so little valued that Ruskin had to fly to his defense. The virtues of simple life and of religious association were enough for the solid minds of a growing bourgeoisie. In a space of forty or fifty years a remarkable reversal in taste was experienced in England, and at the base of that change lies the middle class viewpoint. Social necessity was making it imperative, and new methods of publicity were making it possible, that this viewpoint be expressed. The art of the common Englishman was finally to have its day. It was a day that lasted - with little deviation in esthetic temperature and climate - through the vogues, brotherhoods, art journals, academies, exhibitions, book-illustrations, and gospels of the ensuing century.

Hazlitt best represents the art criticism of the Romantic movement. He is indisputably the most original and intelligent critic of pictures that the century can boast before Ruskin. Beginning his career as a student of art, he came back from a short residence in Paris, where he made routine copies of masterpieces in the Louvre, and spent a few years in rural England as an itinerant portrait and landscape painter. Of his paintings, however,

only the portrait of Lamb in the National Portrait Gallery has kept any reputation. By 1807 or 1808 he seems to have abandoned the painter's profession and thrown his lot in with journalism. For The Morning Chronicle, The Examiner, The Champion, The Times, and The London Magazine he wrote the several hundred articles and essays on which his literary fame rests, and among these lie the several scores of papers on art which form the basis of his contribution to art appreciation in England. To these scattered papers he added a number of more ambitious works: Sketches of the Principal Picture-Galleries in England (1824), Notes of a Journey through France and Italy (1826), a Catalogue Raisonne of the British Institution (1816), and the Conversations of James Northcote. The mass of his criticisms on art was collected and edited by his son in 1843-4, and again by W. C. Hazlitt as Essays on the Fine Arts (1873), whence they have passed into the standard editions of Hazlitt's work.

Of the origins of Hazlitt's love of painting Mr. P. P.

Howe has said:

"As a boy and as a young man, Hazlitt loved pictures. To him, they were the reflection of what was beautiful in nature. It will be remembered that he tried to become a painter and turned aside from that profession only when he recognized that he could not be equal to any one of his ideal painters, Claude, Rembrandt, Titian, or Raphael. He wrote once, 'I am a slave to the picturesque,' and so he was. In the face of nature, he saw the charm of line and color, and his essays abound in passages that could only have been written by one who was sensitive to those effects of landscape which the painter sees....In his appreciation of painting, he tried, above everything else, to be honest with himself....If he got no further than an expression of his feelings, at any rate he said what he liked, not because it was the fashion to like a certain picture or because he found it starred in a guide-book, but because he liked it. 'My taste in pictures is, I believe, very different from that of rich and princely collectors....I should like to have a few pictures hung round the room that speak to me with well-known looks, that touch some string of memory, not a number of varnished, smooth,

glittering gew-gaws."⁶⁷

This admirably expresses Hazlitt's position and value. He looked on his esthetic talent as a personal matter, not as a polite or conformist taste. He thought, moreover, in terms of common likes and dislikes, and wrote for such a viewpoint in the magazines that engaged him. It is also true that "he contributed little or nothing to a philosophical discussion of the arts,"⁶⁸ but what he lacks in this way is balanced by his importance as an indicator - intelligent and with certain analytical talents - of new tastes and attitudes in art. Professor Chase has pointed out that Hazlitt anticipated Ruskin in his antagonism to regularity, conventionalism, the coldness of established schools; that he natively disliked classicism and all that it implied; but in counterbalancing its influence with his own theory of realism in art he really ended up by being, not a realist, but a defender of romantic morality and appreciation.⁶⁹

Hazlitt believed that the criticism of art is a serious branch of philosophical enquiry distinct from the practice of painting or sculpture itself. The artist is not the man to realize this. He has technical and creative problems of his own to work out, and usually betrays his limitations when he tries to rationalize his art.

"I deny in toto and at once the exclusive right and power of painters to judge of pictures. What is a picture meant for? To convey certain ideas to the mind of painters? that is, of one man in ten thousand? - No, but to make them apparent to the eye and mind of all. If a picture be admired by none but painters, I think it is strong presumption that the picture is

⁶⁷Cambridge History of English Literature, XII, Chapter VII, "Hazlitt," by P. P. Howe (Cambridge, 1932), 172-3.

⁶⁸Ibid., 173.

⁶⁹Stanley P. Chase, "Hazlitt as a Critic of Art," PMLA, XXXIX (1924), 179-203. See especially pp. 201-3.

bad. A painter is no more a judge, I suppose, than another man of how people feel and look under certain passions and events. Every body sees as well as him whether certain figures on the canvas are like such a man, or like a cow, a tree, a bridge, or a windmill. All that the painter can do more than the lay spectator, is to tell why and how the merits and defects of a picture are produced. He shows me why the picture is bad, but I am just as well capable of saying 'The picture is bad' as he is.... I am far from saying that any one is capable of duly judging pictures of the higher class. It requires a mind capable of estimating the noble, or touching, or terrible, or sublime subjects which they present - but there is no sort of necessity that we should be able to put them upon the canvas ourselves."⁷⁰

This passage, from the essay "Judging of Pictures," besides defending the layman's approach to art, indicates strongly the romantic bias of Hazlitt's esthetic. Art exists for common consumption, and must thus be approached in terms of common experience. It handles not merely objects, but emotions and conceptions, of average experience. The painter must present these effectively - and by effect Hazlitt meant only secondarily technical or formal quality. He emphasized the power of a canvas to concentrate normal experience. Inevitably this implied moral and sentimental content.

"The Art of Painting is one equally delightful to the eye and to the mind. It has very nearly the reality of dramatic exhibition, and has permanence, which that is wholly without. We may gaze at a picture, and pause to think, and turn and gaze again. The art is inferior to poetry in magnitude or extent and succession of detail - but its power over any one point is far superior: it seizes it, and figures it forth in corporeal existence if not in bodily life. It gives to the eye the physical semblance of those figures which have floated in vagueness in the mind. It condenses indistinct and gauzy visions into palpable forms - as, in the story, the morning mist gathered into the embodying form a spirit. But shall it be said that the enchanter alone can judge of the enchantment - that none shall have an eye to see, and a heart to feel, unless he have also a hand to execute? Alas, our inherent perceptions give the lie to this."⁷¹

This essay, in The Literary Examiner for August 2, 1823, has an important supplement in the article on "Fine Arts" which Hazlitt

⁷⁰William Hazlitt, Collected Works, edited by A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover (London, 1903), IX, 357-8. (This edition will hereafter be referred to as 'Hazlitt'.)

⁷¹Hazlitt, IX, 359.

contributed to the Encyclopaedia Britannica in 1824.⁷² Here he joined forces with Haydon (who wrote the article on "Painting") in correcting the aristocratic and classical conception of art in common life. Here also he maintained that all the arts "owe their pre-eminence and perfection to one and the same principle, - the immediate imitation of nature."⁷³ But he did not use this term in its classical and academic sense. He wished to show that the "ideal system of art" usually advocated under that sense is one of artificial and arbitrary exclusions. The "ideal" to Hazlitt retained its unfavorable Eighteenth Century connotation: it was synonymous with the restricted categories of nature admitted to esthetics in the age of Pope and Reynolds, and ruled out the realism of Hogarth, whom Hazlitt in this article takes as his first artist to defend. He defends "actual nature" against "the common notion of the ideal."⁷⁴ He denounces alike the notion of "general" form advocated by Reynolds and the heroic or rhetorical subjects whereby the neo-classical painters tried to realize that ideal.

"it may be laid down as a rule, that the most perfect of the antiques are the most simple; - those which affect the least action, or violence of passion; - which repose the most on natural beauty of form, and a certain expression of sweetness and dignity, that is, which remain most nearly in that state in which they could be copied from nature without straining the limbs or features of the individual, or racking the invention of the artist."⁷⁵

⁷²The Britannica article had appeared as articles in The Champion for August 28, September 11, and October 2, 1814, and these were supplemented in that paper on October 30 and November 6 by two papers on the "Character of Sir Joshua Reynolds." With Haydon's Britannica article on "Painting," Hazlitt's essays on "Fine Arts" were issued in book form in Edinburgh in 1838. In Table Talk Nos. XIII and XIV Hazlitt wrote further "On Certain Inconsistencies in Sir Joshua Reynolds' Discourses," and again on Reynolds as critic in The Champion for November 27, December 4 and 25, 1814, and January 8, 1815. These papers are reprinted in 'Hazlitt,' Volumes XI and XII.

⁷³Hazlitt, IX, 377.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid., 378-9.

Throughout this article the viewpoint of laymen is defended. It even leads Hazlitt into giving his evasive definition of the ideal in "true nature and true art":

"The ideal is not the preference of that which exists only in the mind, to that which exists in nature; but the preference of that which is fine in nature to that which is less so. There is nothing fine in art but what is taken almost immediately, and, as it were, in the mass, from what is finer in nature. Where there have been the finest models in nature, there have been the finest works of art."⁷⁶

This ingenuous and, as Professor Chase has pointed out, question-begging definition Hazlitt supports by saying that Greek art was easily ideal, first because of the physical beauty of the Greek people, and secondly, because climatic conditions made it possible for them to reveal their physical beauty without restraint or artifice.⁷⁷ He elaborated his definition by saying that

"The ideal is not a negative but a positive thing. The leaving out the details or peculiarities of an individual face does not make it one jot more ideal.... abstract truth or ideal perfection does not consist in rejecting the peculiarities of form, but in rejecting all those which are not consistent with the character intended to be given.... But these modifications of form or expression can only be learnt from nature, and therefore the perfection of art must always be sought in nature."⁷⁸

Such perfection he found not only in the finest antique sculptures but in his favorite Renaissance painters: Michael Angelo, Raphael, Leonardo, Correggio, Titian and the Venetians (who apparently

⁷⁶Ibid., 379.

⁷⁷Ruskin also believed that only "so much of the nude body as in the daily life of the nation may be shown with modesty, and seen with reverence and delight, - so much and no more, ought to be shown by the national arts, either of painting or sculpture. What, more than this, either art exhibits, will, assuredly, pervert taste, and, in all probability, morals." Works, Library Edition, edited by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London, 1909), XXII, 234. He also held that the anatomical study of the nude was "destructive to every school of art in which it has been practiced," (Works, XVII, 364), and for these reasons, among others, rejected the Greek which Hazlitt honored, although their conceptions of the place of the nude in art were much alike. Cf. Ladd, Op. cit., 395.

⁷⁸Hazlitt, IX, 405.

delighted Hazlitt as much as they disgusted Blake), and Rembrandt.

Of art in his own country Hazlitt did not speak, in the Britannica article, with great pride, although he had the luck to seek quality where it actually existed. His aversion to Eighteenth Century classical schools caused him to omit almost all of their representatives except Reynolds, whom he treated with respect because, despite his artificial doctrines, he

"owed his vast superiority over his contemporaries to incessant practice, and habitual attention to nature, to quick organic sensibility, to considerable power of observation, and still greater taste in perceiving and availing himself of those excellences of others, which lay within his own walk of art."⁷⁹

He denies him "the first rank of genius." Similarly he puts Gainsborough down rather as "a man of delicate taste, and of an elegant and feeling mind, than as a man of genius; as a lover of the art, rather than an artist." Hazlitt's own addiction to the picturesque had, by 1824, waned sufficiently to make him hold Richard Wilson in strict reserve. Whatever the picturesque had to recommend it (and in his essay on Poussin Hazlitt's devotion to its powers is emphatic), he readily saw in Wilson the debasement to which the picturesque had relegated nature.

"In general, Wilson's views of English scenery want almost every thing that ought to recommend them. The subjects he has chosen are not well fitted for the landscape-painter, and there is nothing in the execution to redeem them. Ill-shaped mountains, or great heaps of earth, trees that grow against them without character or elegance, motionless waterfalls, a want of relief, of transparency and distance, without the imposing grandeur of real magnitude (which it is scarcely within the province of art to give), - are the chief features and defects of this class of his pictures."⁸⁰

One phrase in this passage is particularly important. Hazlitt defines the defect of picturesque art when he states that the true quality for which it strives, "the imposing grandeur of real magni-

⁷⁹Hazlitt, IX, 397.

⁸⁰Ibid., 392.

tude," is "scarcely within the province of art to give." This is one of the most emphatic repudiations of the literary and emotional claims of picturesque beauty (and, indeed, of the sublime) in contemporary criticism. It was those claims that made Hazlitt realize the low state of English art: it had never realized its normal functions, either in the imitation of nature, or in the mastery of form. It was because Claude had realized those functions, and because English artists like Wilson had replaced them with irrelevant literary and rhetorical appeal, that made Hazlitt declare that despite Wilson's "great truth, harmony, and depth of local colouring," "there is no comparison between" the two painters.⁸¹ Hogarth alone claimed Hazlitt's whole-hearted respect among English painters, and that respect was based at once on Hogarth's natural realism and on his popular appeal.

"Criticism has not done him justice, though public opinion has. His works have received a sanction which it would be vain to dispute, in the universal delight and admiration with which they have been regarded, from their first appearance, to the present moment. If the quantity of amusement, or of matter for reflection which they have afforded, is that by which we are to judge of precedence among the intellectual benefactors of mankind, there are perhaps few persons who can put in a stronger claim to our gratitude than Hogarth.... Make what deductions you please for the vulgarity of the subjects - yet in the research, the profundity, the absolute truth and precision of the delineation of character, - in the invention of incident, in wit and humour, in life and motion, in everlasting variety and originality, - they never have, and probably never will be, surpassed."⁸²

Hazlitt's two criteria - the real and the common - are in strong evidence here, and make his repudiation of Benjamin West (his pictures "exhibit the mask, not the soul of expression")⁸³ and his general pessimism concerning the "Present State of British Art" explicable. Yet the article ends with a program of "Means of

⁸¹Ibid., 393-4.

⁸²Ibid., 390-1.

⁸³Ibid., 408.

Promoting the Fine Arts." Here he offers a number of suggestions.

(1) A substitution of nature study for classical imitation, which

"tends to enervate the mind, to intercept our view of nature, and to distract the attention by a variety of unattainable excellence. An intimate acquaintance with the works of the celebrated masters may indeed add to the indolent refinements of taste, but will never produce one work of original genius, one great artist."⁸⁴

(2) A rejection of artificial methods and formulae, like the picturesque, and like "the works of Carlo Maratti, of Raphael Mengs, or of any of the effeminate school of critics and copyists, who have attempted to blend the borrowed beauties of others in a perfect whole." (3) A complete reformation of "the public patronage of the arts; - the plan unfortunately defeats itself; for it multiplies its objects faster than it can satisfy their claims; and raises up a swarm of competitors for the prize of genius from the dregs of idleness and dulness." He deplores the waning of "private taste and benevolence" which formerly opposed mass production of art and geniuses by institutions, and every

"mode of patronage, but that which arises, either from the general institutions and manners of a people, or from the real unaffected taste of individuals..."⁸⁵

And finally, he briefly allows that "Academies and Institutions may be supposed to assist the progress of the fine arts, by promoting a wider taste for them."⁸⁶

Throughout Hazlitt's other papers on art the basic doctrines of popular romantic morality assert themselves. In the essay on "Originality," he defines his subject as "any conception of things, taken immediately from nature, and neither borrowed

⁸⁴Ibid., 408.

⁸⁵Ibid., 412.

⁸⁶Ibid.

from, nor common to, others."⁸⁷ In that on "The Ideal" he defines idealism in art as "the abstraction of any thing from all the circumstances that weaken its effect, or lessen our admiration of it," and associates it with "the divine; for, what we imagine of the Gods is pleasure without pain - power without effort."⁸⁸ Such ideality "is in a manner limited to Sculpture and Painting, where the object itself is given entire without any possible change of circumstances, and where, though the impression is momentary, it lasts for ever."⁸⁹ But he does not admit that, while Raphael's madonnas may be superior to Hogarth's faces in point of "permanence," "proportionable sweetness, delicacy, and unity of effect," those faces are not ordinarily preferable. They more often disclose truth, while the ideal, in any but the highest instances, proves to be "a bastard species."⁹⁰

"The ideal, then, is the highest point of purity and perfection to which we can carry the idea of any object or quality. The natural differs from the ideal style, inasmuch as what anything is differs from what we wish and can conceive it to beThe ideal does not transform any object into something else, or neutralize its character, but, by removing what is irrelevant and supplying what was defective, makes it more itself than it was before."⁹¹

In the paper on "English Students at Rome" he discourages the academic routine of art study in continental capitals and galleries of antiquities.

"If Necessity is the mother of Invention it must be stifled in the birth here, where every thing is already done and provided to your hand that you could possibly wish for or think of.... The same thing occurs here that is objected to the inhabitants of great cities in general. They have too many objects always passing before them, that engage their attention and fill up their time, to allow them either much leisure or inclination for thought or study. Rome is the great metropolis of Art;

⁸⁷Ibid., 423.

⁸⁸Ibid., 429.

⁸⁹Ibid., 432.

⁹⁰Ibid., 433.

⁹¹Ibid., 433-4.

and it is somewhat to be feared that those who take up their abode there will become, like other cockneys, ignorant, conceited, and superficial."⁹²

And amid fulminations against the atmosphere of Roman studios, churches, streets, and companions (including that of the "Roman beauty" whose smile "must be well nigh fatal to many an English student at Rome")⁹³ he recommends that English art students give up "tampering and dalliance with subjects, with which we have little acquaintance and less business" and return to the humble scenes and subjects out of which all true art grows - in England as well as on the continent.⁹⁴ Indeed, Hazlitt's Notes of a Journey through France and Italy, which are a delightful mixture of casual observation and studious analysis of masterpieces in galleries and churches, end by admitting the "long, straggling, dirty country-town" appearance of London when contrasted with Sienna, Pisa, Ferrara, etc., but "however delightful or striking the objects may be abroad, they do not take the same hold of you, nor can you identify yourself with them as at home."⁹⁵ Such identification is necessary for the artist's mastery of his material.

"It is well to see foreign countries to enlarge one's speculative knowledge, and dispel false prejudices and libellous views of human nature; but our affections must settle at home."⁹⁶

Not, however, in the official seats of art instruction there.

"The Catalogue Raisonne of the British Institution" (printed in The Examiner, November 3, 1816) repeats what is implied everywhere in Hazlitt's statements on art: his contempt of vested interests.

⁹²Ibid., 368.

⁹³Ibid., 376.

⁹⁴Ibid., 374-5.

⁹⁵Ibid., 302.

⁹⁶Ibid., 302-3.

"The English are a shop-keeping nation, and the Royal Academy are a society of hucksters in the Fine Arts, who are more tenacious of their profits as chapmen and dealers, than of the honour of the Art. A society for the encouragement and promotion of Art has no right to exist at all, from the moment that it professes to exist only in wrong of Art, by the suppression of the knowledge of Art, in contempt of genius in Art, in defiance of all manly and liberal sentiment in Art.... The Academy, from its commencement and up to the present hour, is in fact, a mercantile body, like any other mercantile body, consisting chiefly in manufacturers of portraits, who have got a regular monopoly of this branch of trade, with a certain rank, style, and title of their own, that is, with the King's privilege to be thought Artists and men of genius, - who, with the jealousy natural to such bodies, supported by authority from without, and by cabal within, think themselves bound to crush all generous views and liberal principles of Art, lest they should interfere with their monopoly and their privilege to be thought Artists and men of genius.... etc., etc."⁹⁷

Hazlitt's vituperation is painful only because it has become increasingly justified with every decade that has passed since he expressed it. In his denunciations of "Professional Art," of "enemies of originality," "defenders of decorum" who are opposed to "anything that would strike the eye, or that you would ever think of again," he belongs on the side of Blake, Haydon, Hunt, Coleridge, and the Pre-Raphaelites. A history of opposition to the Royal Academy has not yet been written, but when it is, these men will be its pioneer heroes.

For Hazlitt the corruption of art by official and academic interests was instigated by the Academy's first president, Reynolds. His repudiation of the Discourses is as systematic as Blake's. This was not because the Discourses expressed the highest classical idealism. Such idealism Hazlitt had been reared with, and during his Parisian sojourn he had come to revere it, particularly in the great classicist from whom much neo-classical doctrine and much picturesque enthusiasm stemmed in Eighteenth Century England, Poussin. In the essay "On a Landscape of Niccolas

⁹⁷Ibid., 312.

Poussin" Hazlitt defined his understanding of true esthetic classicism:

"To give us nature, such as we see it, is well and deserving of praise; to give us nature, such as we have never seen, but have often wished to see it, is better, and deserving of higher praise. He who can show the world in its first naked glory, with the hues of fancy spread over it, or in its high and palmy state, with the gravity of history stamped on the proud monuments of vanished empire, - who, by his 'so potent art,' can recall time past, transport us to distant places, and join the regions of imagination (a new conquest) to those of reality, - who shows us not only what nature is, but what she has been, and is capable of, - he who does this, and does it with simplicity, with truth, and grandeur, is lord of nature and her powers; and his mind is universal, and his art the master-art!"⁹⁸

In the passage from which this paragraph is taken, Hazlitt sums up his scattered definitions of the ideal, of imagination, of beauty, and of nature in a typical panegyric of the romantic conception of classical universality - that inverted classicism which the Nineteenth Century was to turn to unpredicted uses in the dissimilar work of Landor, Arnold, Pater, Swinburne, and Wilde - all of them reputedly "classicists." But Hazlitt laid no claim to this designation. He was re-defining the classical ideal in terms of romantic feeling and imagination, and on the basis of nature's claim to the artist's undeviating reverence. Such fusion he saw in Poussin, and in his eulogy the transformation of a taste for the picturesque into one for sentimental and moral beauty may be discerned.

"Poussin was, of all painters, the most poetical. He was the painter of ideas. No one ever told a story half so well, nor so well knew what was capable of being told by the pencil. There is a significance, a consciousness in whatever he does (sometimes a vice, but oftener a virtue) beyond any other painter. Even inanimate and dumb things speak a language of their own.... His picture of the Deluge is, perhaps, the finest historical landscape in the world....everything seems to have a distinct understanding with the artist; 'the very stones prate of their whereabouts'; each object has its part and place assigned, and is in a sort of compact with the rest

⁹⁸In *Essays of William Hazlitt*, edited by Percy van Dyke Shelly (New York: Modern Student's Library, 1924), 66-7.

of the picture. It is this conscious keeping, and, as it were, internal design, that gives their peculiar character to the works of this artist."⁹⁹

This "internal design" and "significance" Hazlitt found lacking in much of the painting, and in almost all of the dogmas, of Reynolds and his school. Some years later Ruskin criticized Reynolds because he separated "as chief enemies, the details and the whole, which an artist cannot be great unless he reconciles."¹⁰⁰ Hazlitt anticipated this observation. His attacks on Reynolds appear not only in the Encyclopaedia Britannica essay on "Fine Arts" and in the paper "On the Elgin Marbles" (London Magazine, February and May, 1822), but in the earlier Champion articles of August-November, 1814, and those in The Examiner (June 16 and 30, 1816), as well as in the notes "On Certain Inconsistencies in Sir Joshua Reynolds' Discourses" in Table Talk (1821). Throughout these papers runs Hazlitt's corrective definition of the ideal: not as "the preference of that which exists only in the mind, to that which exists in nature," and as the art which succeeds in "uniting general truth and effect with individual distinctness and accuracy."¹⁰¹

In historical painting "those details or peculiarities only are inadmissible....which do not arise out of any principle, or tend to any conclusion, - which are merely casual, insignificant, and unconnected, - which do not tell."¹⁰² Even Poussin was too emotional for Reynolds, whereas to Hazlitt Poussin was "hardly surpassed" for his true grasp of classical unity and naturalism. Reynolds' denunciation of Dutch and Flemish realism in the Idler

⁹⁹Ibid., 69-70.

¹⁰⁰Alice Meynell, John Ruskin (London, 1901), 13.

¹⁰¹Hazlitt, IX, 379.

¹⁰²Ibid., XI, 228.

papers was another incentive to Hazlitt's dislike, for Hazlitt paired Rembrandt and de Hooch with his favorite Italians. In Hazlitt two ideals combined - realism and emotional power - and both were fundamentally distasteful to Reynolds. Thus there was generated in Hazlitt's mind so great an antipathy to the doctrines of Reynolds that he overlooked the common sense of the Discourses, their warnings against slovenliness and inexactness of technique; and their freedom from the pedantry which Hazlitt thought he saw transfigured there. These admirable qualities of the Discourses (unlike the admirable qualities in Reynolds' painting, which Hazlitt respected) made little appeal to the exuberance and fervor of Hazlitt's devotion to the imaginative and poetic functions of art. Whatever Reynolds conceded by way of originality and naturalism to the classical painter was lost on Hazlitt, for Reynolds ultimately stood firm against the element that Hazlitt venerated most - gusto. "If you mean to preserve the most perfect beauty in its most perfect state, you cannot express the passions," said Reynolds in the Fifth Discourse, whereas Hazlitt held that the crowning property of all great art is gusto - "the power or passion in defining any object."¹⁰³ Thus he lavished his praise on Titian, Correggio, Michael Angelo, Rembrandt, and Rubens; on great masters of esthetic and pictorial vitality; on art that holds the mirror up to nature as "seen through the medium of passion and imagination, not divested of that medium by means of literal truth or abstract reason";¹⁰⁴ on the "graceful forms and bright colouring and voluptuous sensation" which, as Sir Leslie Stephen said, link him to the late Renaissance masters of Flanders

¹⁰³Hazlitt, I, 77.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., v, 8.

and Italy.¹⁰⁵ Professor Chase has said that Hazlitt, boasting of his ideal of realism against that of abstraction, succeeded in being no true realist but merely a revolting romanticist, a believer in the poetic and moral "otherworldliness" of art.¹⁰⁶ This is true, but in a more exact sense. Romantic art represented to Hazlitt the reconciliation of slavish imitation with a transcendental vision of nature and human form; the fusion could come about only through imaginative and emotional intensity, and in terms of a great transfiguring sympathy. By means of that sympathy art might divine the "abstract truth or ideal perfection" of nature and at the same time communicate its truth to the common man. Thus art would fulfill its two great purposes: "knowledge of actual nature" and "the delight and improvement of man."¹⁰⁷

iv

"If I wished to advance High Art," says Haydon in his Autobiography for 1810, "I must look beyond fashion and its coteries to the people of Britain. I must qualify myself to instruct them and make them react on the upper class."¹⁰⁸ This strain of evangelical inspiration runs through all Haydon's writings. He was by temperament, if not by intelligence and genius, well equipped to wage warfare against the vested offices of English art on behalf of "the people of Britain," and his fulminations, abusive letters,

¹⁰⁵Leslie Stephen, Hours in a Library (London, 1908), II, 240.

¹⁰⁶Chase, Op. cit., 198-202.

¹⁰⁷Supplementary to Hazlitt's esthetic doctrines are the informal ideas developed in two essays, "On the Imitation of Nature," and "On the Pleasure of Painting," where the ideas analyzed above are given practical and descriptive application.

¹⁰⁸The Autobiography and Memoirs of Benjamin Robert Haydon, edited from his Journals by Tom Taylor. A new edition with an Introduction by Aldous Huxley (London, 1926), I, 109-10.

heated challenges, and defiant outcries reflect the messianic arrogance of his famous canvases.

"Haydon's belief in himself was infectious, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say contagious," says Aldous Huxley, in his edition of the Autobiography,

"for it was only while one was actually in the presence of the man himself that one could fully believe in his powers as an artist. In front of his pictures, even his most admiring friends must occasionally have had their doubts. But the man had such a masterful and magnetic personality, was so large, so exuberantly vital, so intelligent and plausible, such a good critic of all art but his own, so well read, such an entertaining talker, that it was impossible not to take fire at his ardour; it was difficult when he said, 'I am a great artist,' not to believe him."¹⁰⁹

Keats believed him, apparently, and he won the respect of Lamb, Hunt, Prince Hoare, and Sir George Beaumont. His attacks on the Royal Academy and his defenses of the Elgin marbles alone assure him a place on the right side of the records of English taste, whatever damaging debits the account of his own paintings may show. Hazlitt won his friendship through the abuses heaped, in the Catalogue Raisonne, on the Academy, as a means of defending the new school of art at the British Institution, and Haydon appears on the whole to have been a Hazlitt without restraints or esthetic methods to guide him. He was not basically a radical.¹¹⁰ His antagonism to the Academy was based on personal enmity and rancor. His pictures, Christ's Entry into Jerusalem (now in

¹⁰⁹Ibid., I, xi-xii.

¹¹⁰Haydon's relations with Prince Hoare are illustrative. Hoare's letters in the edition used here show his, and Haydon's allegiance to the Eighteenth Century categories of sublimity. In November 1810 Hoare wrote to Haydon: "The subject you have chosen is one in which the excitement of terror in certain points becomes a positive object of your pursuit. For this reason, I am disposed to believe that the pursuit also of a proportionate quality of beauty, such as may counter-balance and give due effect to the points of terror, is of the utmost importance to you. We must never forget that beauty is and must be invariably the essential object of the fine arts.... Painting and poetry are alike in this...." (Ibid., I, lll).

Cincinnati), The Raising of Lazarus, The Agony in the Garden, etc., are a particularly empty type of historical painting, which, as Ladd has said, "he justified on a curious blend of naturalistic, academic, didactic, and moral grounds,"¹¹¹ and reproductions lead one to share Huxley's conviction that they "must be entirely worthless."¹¹² Yet in the fortunes of English taste Haydon played an important role. His wide acquaintance with literary men, English and continental, and his letters to newspapers and journals, show him voicing the middle class faith in the morality of nature and of art. Haydon was not an orderly artist; it could not be expected that he would be a consistent apologist. He drew on both classical and romantic styles in his painting, and blended their motives recklessly in his allegories. The same confusion of taste is apparent in his prose. He asserted that God is revealed not through idealization of form, but through nature, yet he held up Phidias and the Greeks as sculptors who had through their devotion to nature "restored to each object the essential qualities given by God."¹¹³ He repudiated academic instruction, yet stood also against an inspirational theory of genius, and taught that the best technical training comes through copying nature minutely. He was against subduing the artist to inartistic tasks, yet believed that the purpose of art is not to please, but to "instruct by pleasing."¹¹⁴ His own paintings gush with violent action and with crude Venetian grandiloquence, yet he singularly chose to admire Giotto as highest among the Italians.

Haydon's propaganda for art remains his most positive

¹¹¹Ladd, Op. cit., 44.

¹¹²Huxley, Op. cit., vii.

¹¹³Benjamin Robert Haydon, Correspondence and Table Talk, ed. by F. Wordsworth Haydon (London, 1878), I, 324-5.

¹¹⁴Ibid., I, 59.

achievement outside the pages of his colorful autobiography. He lectured not only in London, but in Newcastle, Hull, Sheffield, and other towns, hoping in some places to establish art schools and "a union of artists and mechanics" which might elevate the manufacture of commercial products in England. He had the social conception of art long before it was defended by Carlyle, Ruskin, and Morris, and but for his ignorance of machine craft and commercial methods (not to mention again his irascibility and eccentric behaviour) he might have carried his pioneer ideals into effect long before the establishment of the Guild of St. George or Red Lion House. His immense energy had succeeded in gaining a circle of influential friends which Ruskin lacked even mid-way through his career. But his destiny was cut over a different pattern than Ruskin's, and even before he committed suicide at the age of sixty Haydon was realizing the folly of his dreams. In his Memoirs, under the date of July 9, 1842, he wrote:

"The greatest curse that can befall a father in England is to have a son gifted with a passion and a genius for High Art. Thank God with all my soul and all my nature, my children have witnessed the harassing agonies under which I have ever painted; and the very name of painting, the very name of High Art, the very thought of a picture, gives them a hideous and disgusting taste in their mouths. Thank God, not one of my boys, nor my girl, can draw a straight line, even with a ruler, much less without one. And I pray God, on my knees, with my forehead bent to the earth, and my lips to the dust, that He will, in His mercy, afflict them with every other passion, appetite, or misery, with wretchedness, disease, insanity, or gabbling idiotism, rather than a longing for painting - that scorned, miserable art, that greater imposture than the human species it imitates."115

The conditions which drove Haydon to this despair, so far as they existed outside his own character, were the work of the same Academy which Reynolds had founded in 1769, which Blake had hated, which Coleridge suspected of "official tyranny and worse,"

115 Autobiography, II, 734.

and on which Hazlitt had expended his most abusive epithets. All these attacks - and many more - were to culminate in the furious onslaught of Joseph Hume in 1837-9, and again in July, 1844, when the Academy's right to charge admission to the public and to students was challenged by him in Parliament.¹¹⁶ Hume not only claimed that the Academy had departed from the original intention of its founder, but "was no longer of any service to the cause of art in the country; and, as a consequence, entreating that it might be ejected from the apartments assigned to it in Trafalgar Square."¹¹⁷ "Natural enemies" are bound to rise around an institution; when the rejection of pictures at exhibitions is involved, the rage of sensibilities is particularly to be anticipated. The history of Royal Academy warfare is a long one, distinguished, however, by the almost uniform and undeviating somnolence of the institution itself in the face of skirmishes, sudden attacks, and barrage-fire. The period here studied saw the first vigorous campaign against Academic dictatorship, which may be almost exactly dated from Blake's exhibition catalogue of 1809 to Hume's attack at the end of the thirties. Turner's resignation from his Professorship in 1837, after thirty years of service, removed even that notable figure and his adherents from their loyalty to the shrine. In a succession of presidents and lecturers, the work of three particularly stands out. These were James Barry, John Opie, and Henry Fuseli, and Fuseli alone seems to have shared certain libertarian ideals with Blake and Hazlitt.

Barry adapted his principles straight from Reynolds, with aid from the Scotch associationists. He declared that all art

¹¹⁶George Dunlop Leslie, The Inner Life of the Royal Academy (London, 1914), 267-73.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 272.

must be an enhancement of nature, and all method based on classical imitation. Beauty resides in general or abstract nature, not in realism. God is responsible for the perfection of "general nature"; man is evidently capable of seeing blemishes in this perfection, and above such blemishes he must rise. With almost no metaphysical subtlety, he managed to identify beauty with goodness and truth, but in purely abstract and ideal terms.

"As to beauty, prudence may and often does incline us to hesitate in our election of the greater or lesser degree of it, in proportion to the association of those degrees of beauty with other valuable or worthless qualities. These ideas of beauty, order, and goodness, have an intimate and almost immediate reference to each other in the mind; as absolute and complete satisfaction can only result from the perfect union of all these qualities in their highest degree. Therefore it is, that the pleasure which we receive in the contemplation of human nature (where beauty may be in a high degree united with those other qualities) is much greater than that which results from the contemplation of beauty in all the species of animal, vegetable, and other objects, where moral agency does not exist: and yet, such is the innate force or power of mere beauty, even in the lowest order of beings, that the particular perfections discoverable amongst quadrupeds, birds, fishes, trees, and flowers, are sure to excite in us agreeable sensations, and incline us to a predilection and choice, of which those irrational beings appear utterly unconscious and insensible."¹¹⁸

All such qualities of beauty, sublimity, and wisdom as fall within the privilege of man to observe, and "so essentially requisite in the design of a great artist, can only be found in abstract or general nature; and when found and united by the skill of the artist, they are easily and with pleasure recognized by all men."¹¹⁹ Barry seems to have wanted art to serve society, but he had no method of bringing it into contact with common men. His lectures carry all the savor of academic aloofness to social problems. "General ideas are the first ideas we acquire; we know the species before we know the individual; and children, as Aristotle observes, will call

¹¹⁸Lectures on Painting, by the Royal Academicians, edited with an Introduction and Notes Critical and Illustrative, by Ralph N. Wornum (London, 1889), 102.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 93-4.

every woman mother for some time."¹²⁰ This is as far to the psychological justification of abstraction as Barry arrives. He conceived the Academy as serving the "gracious intentions of his Majesty, the wishes of the academicians, and the expectations of the public,"¹²¹ and he had published in 1775 An Enquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions to the Acquisition of the Arts in England, in which he expressed general pessimism on English systems of patronage and instruction; but his discourse on these subjects was inflated by confident generalizations which made no appeal to the insurgents. His most generous view of man was that of the Deist tradition:

"Of all the creatures within the sphere of our inspection man alone appears to be endowed with powers for contemplating many of the great designations, the extensive and various uses, dependencies, and relations, in the creation that surrounds him: hence he is impressed with that just sense of beauty, of wisdom, order, and goodness, which not only form the foundation of religion and virtue, but of all his intellectual satisfaction and happiness."¹²²

Opie expressed a somewhat conciliatory attitude toward romantic realism. He also inherited Reynolds' respect for the grand style and for generalized nature, but he took the classical doctrine of imitation seriously, and believed that the artist should copy minutely the exact forms of nature. With Reynolds' estimate of Dutch realism, therefore, he disagreed. He tried vainly to adhere to the teaching of the master, at the same time that he justified realistic detail. He attempted to justify this haphazard reconciliation of two dualistically opposed standards, by saying that the general is divinely and ideally perfect, but the specific is humanly necessary, because only by specific detail are associations stimulated in the mind, and these associations

¹²⁰Ibid., 94.

¹²¹Ibid., 87 f.

¹²²Ibid., 56 f.

alone can bring man into personal knowledge of the Divine.¹²³ Thus classicism and associationism, two irreconcilable principles, attempt a compromise in Opie's work. From Mengs' "Reflections" he had gathered the idea that art consists in the identification of mind with matter,¹²⁴ and he attempted to bring them into harmony by superimposing the empirical theory of practical association upon the classical theory of abstract ideality. A keener mind than Opie's would have been required to effect this monism.

The career of Henry Fuseli in England is a more important aspect of the academic tradition. Fuseli, a naturalized Swiss, the friend of Blake's respected Lavater, had settled in England in 1779, was elected an Academician in 1790, and Keeper in 1804. Haydon was one of his students, and it is with Haydon and Hazlitt that Fuseli must be classed in the liberalism and imagination which he brought to the interpretation of the grand style, the classical tradition, and the uses of art in the state. His friend and executor, John Knowles, F.R.S., issued in 1831 a monumental Life and Writings in which Fuseli's letters, lectures, and aphorisms are preserved. Here the "imitation of Nature" is still regarded as the basic discipline in all art, and must be applied to appropriate subjects:

"...though all Nature seem to teem with objects of imitation, the 'choice' of subjects is a point of great importance to the Artist; the conception, the progress, the finish, and the success of his work depend upon it."¹²⁵

¹²³Ibid., 105-9.

¹²⁴Anthony Raphael Mengs' Reflections upon Beauty and Taste in Painting (London, 1796) had a strong Plotinian cast, and undoubtedly influenced Academic taste with the idea that perfection of beauty proceeds from God. In 1782 had appeared Dillon's translation of Mengs' Sketches on the Art of Painting also an important academic influence for many years. Victor Cousin's Lectures on Taste (London, 1819) also contained neo-Platonic elements and were held in great respect by the early Academicians.

¹²⁵The Life and Writings of Henry Fuseli, Esq., M.A., R.A., Edited by John Knowles (London, 1831), II, 189.

Yet such imitation is divided into "Iconic and Ideal": "Iconic imitation is confined to an individuum or model, whose parts it delineates according to their character and essence" while ideal imitation presents "nature as a collective idea, and though its essence exist in each individual of the species, can never in its perfection inhabit a single object."¹²⁶ Yet against academic pedantry in imitation Fuseli stood resolutely. He did not confuse true imitation with copying. "Such is the aspiring nature of man, that nothing wounds the copyist more sorely than the suspicion of being thought what he is" he said in an aphorism (no. 115),¹²⁷ and "Imitation seems to cease where the ideal part begins" (no. 100) because "the imitator rises above the copyist by generalizing the individual to a class; the idealist mounts above the imitator by uniting classes."¹²⁸

Fuseli was pessimistic about contemporary English art. He had not the sympathy that could find encouragement in the work of Constable, Bonington, and Turner; and so he ascribed the low state of the arts in England not to any particular cause "which private patronage, or the will of an individual, however great, can remove," but to

"the bent, the manners, habits, modes of a nation, - and not of one nation alone, but of all who at present pretend to culture. Our age, when compared with former ages, has but little occasion for great works, and that is the reason why so few are produced:the ambition, activity, and spirit of public life is shrunk to the minute detail of domestic arrangements - every thing that surrounds us tends to show us in private, is become snug, less, narrow, pretty, insignificant. We are not, perhaps, the less happy on account of all this; but from such selfish trifling to expect a system of Art built on grandeur, without a total revolution, would only be less presumptuous than insane."¹²⁹

¹²⁶Ibid., II, 312.

¹²⁷Ibid., III, 105.

¹²⁸Ibid., III, 96-7.

¹²⁹Ibid., III, 47-8.

He sees the Academy, after "more than half a century," still "condemned, if not to the beasts, at least to the dictates of fashion and vanity."

"....as far as the public is concerned, the Art is sinking, and threatens to sink still deeper; from the want of demand for great and significant works."¹³⁰

The vein of hopelessness deepens, and Fuseli saw only one way out: to provide elevating lectures and rigorous instruction for students.

"To raise the Arts to a conspicuous height may not perhaps be in our power; we shall have deserved well of posterity if we succeed in stemming their farther downfall, if we fix them on the solid base of principle. If it be out of our power to furnish the student's activity with adequate practice, we may contribute to form his theory; and Criticism founded on experiment, instructed by comparison, in possession of the labours of every epoch of Art, may spread the genuine elements of taste, and check the present torrent of affectation and insipidity."¹³¹

In common taste Fuseli refused to see the human norm which Hazlitt and even Ruskin saw there. The degeneration of art could hope for little from the common viewpoint. He found little good to say of the common taste which asserted itself in such vogues as the picturesque or the historical. Aphorism 54 states that "The painter, who makes an historical figure address the spectator from the canvas, and the actor who addresses a soliloquy to you from the stage, have equal claims to your contempt or pity";¹³² and No. 59 holds that "all conceits, not founded upon probable combinations of nature, are absurd. The capricci of Salvator Rosa, and of his imitators, are, to the friends of Michael Angelo, what the paroxysms of a fever are to the sallies of vigorous fancy."¹³³ He believed that "Grandeur of conception will predominate over the most vulgar materials," and remarks that if in Rembrandt's or

¹³⁰Ibid., III, 55 f.

¹³¹Ibid., III, 55-57.

¹³²Ibid., III, 80.

¹³³Ibid., III, 81.

Lievens' religious pictures "the materials had all been equal to the conception, they would have been works of superhuman powers."¹³⁴ Such conception he had no hesitation in ascribing to "religious enthusiasm" which gave "lasting and energetic impulse" to the arts of Europe when they first emerged out of barbarism.¹³⁵ But

"as zeal relented and public grandeur gave way to private splendour, the Arts became the hirelings of Vanity and Wealth; servile they roamed from place to place, ready to administer to the whims and wants of the best bidder: in this point of sight we can easily solve all the phenomena which occur in the history of Art, - its rise, its fall, eclipse, and re-appearance in various places, with styles as different as various tastes."¹³⁶

To a revival of this "enthusiasm" he looks as a possible hope of the regeneration of taste and the arts in Nineteenth Century England. Fuseli thus becomes one of the first active prophets of the moralistic and religious esthetic doctrines which soon came to reinforce painting and architecture in his country. He saw that

"this benign influence infallibly spreads or diminishes in proportion as its original source, a sense of genuine Beauty, flows from an ample or a scanty vein, in a clear or turbid stream. As Taste is adulterated or sinks, Ornament takes a meagre, clumsy, barbarous, ludicrous, or meretricious form; Affectation dictates; Simplicity and Elegance are loaded; interest vanishes: in a short time Necessity alone remains, and Novelty with Error go hand in hand."¹³⁷

Fuseli comes close to making a truce between Academic doctrines and the new romanticism. Theoretically he saw the necessity of a complete revival of taste, and such revival could come, in a time of confused standards and debased employment, from religion. He failed, however, to see "religious enthusiasm" in terms sufficiently close to common life and faith to make it a practical criterion in art. The impending Gothic revival would have shocked

¹³⁴Ibid., 86-7.

¹³⁵Ibid., 46.

¹³⁶Ibid., III, 47.

¹³⁷Ibid., III, 41-2.

him with its "meretricious form." The middle class viewpoint was not representative of the "refined and cultivated preference" which he had in mind when he referred to the need of art for the sympathy of man. And his ideal of nature as "the general and permanent principles of visible objects," was as abstract as his conception of the independence of art: "the essential part of its subject ought to be comprehended and understood without collateral assistance, without borrowing its commentary from the historian or the poet." Thus Fuseli looks to the past, and not to the art of the immediate future, where both naturalism and anecdotal or historical morality were to be the means of bringing the benighted Englishman once more to realize the ministry of art. And with this basic conservatism, Fuseli represents (even at its most liberal moment) the Academy's antipathy to the doctrines with which Hazlitt, Haydon, and Hunt were stirring up the strife of a new day in art.

v

The greatest task of English esthetics was to bring art before the people, and to make it a part of their lives. Wordsworth, Haydon, and Hazlitt represent successive stages of the new social idealism that was to culminate in Ruskin. If art is to "humanize the soul" it must be within reach of the common man. Toward the end of the Nineteenth Century (1898) Tolstoy was to give this doctrine its last notable form, in What is Art? "Art, all art, has this characteristic, that it unites people."¹³⁸ In a period of religious revival, this doctrine had a special force, for

¹³⁸Tolstoy, What is Art? and Essays on Art (Oxford, World's Classics Series, 1930), 238.

"Christian art either evokes in men feelings which through love of God and of one's neighbor draw them to closer and ever closer union and make them ready for, and capable of, such union; or evokes in them feelings which show them that they are already united in the joys and sorrows of life."¹³⁹

Thus the new English humanitarianism was reinforced by Christian socialism, and both movements were equally anxious to see their reforms advanced by painting and architecture. The first of these Romantic ideals sponsored the humane and sympathetic style of the picturesque and anecdotal painters; the second instigated the Nineteenth Century phase of the Gothic revival. In Pugin, Barry, Ruskin, and Gilbert Scott the two styles were finally harmonized and stamped with the official approval of the English nation. "Whenever esthetic standards are lost, ethical standards rush in to fill the vacuum; for the interest in esthetics dwindles and vanishes, but the interest in ethics is eternal."¹⁴⁰

The popularizing of the new art philosophy developed rapidly in an age of mechanical inventions and educational growths. In the day of Walpole and Beckford art was still considered a gentleman's property; Reynolds has little to say about art and common life; even Price admits that art must protect itself from vulgarization through common taste and sentiment. These views were rapidly falling into disrepute. It did not require the religious aphorisms of Blake, or Hazlitt's plea for "a mutual sympathy" between artists and common men through "common faith," to make the common man feel his right to share in the pleasures of art. Mechanical reproduction, new engraving processes, and the appearance of popular art stores assisted the new journalism in encouraging him in this right. Added to these influences came

¹³⁹Ibid., 241.

¹⁴⁰Kenneth Clark, The Gothic Revival (London, 1928), 190.

the architectural revival, which made it possible for cottages, shops, and public conduits to be built in the style of the mediaeval monastery and cathedral. By 1840, it should have been no great hardship for a man like Tennyson to leave the "Palace of Art" for the common levels of existence, for these were already making headway in rivalling the "lordly pleasure-house" of the poetic soul. The nation that produced Fonthill Abbey, Ashridge, the Houses of Parliament, the Albert Memorial, St. Pancras Station, and the Oxford Museum was determined to make even the purest ivory tower, in contrast to the lower world, a chilly retreat.

The common man first became aware of the new renaissance chiefly through two agencies: the domestic magazines and popular pictorial art. The magazines were not at first artistic in type; they were essay and news periodicals which admitted essays on art in increasing numbers. Typical of these were The Examiner, The London Magazine, The Morning Chronicle, The New Monthly Magazine, The Atlas, The Edinburgh Magazine, and The Champion, in which the articles of Hazlitt, Lamb, Leigh Hunt, Haydon, and de Quincey appeared. To these were added specialized publications like the Annals of the Fine Arts, which issued five volumes between 1817 and 1820; Arnold's Magazine, three volumes, 1833-34; and The Library of the Fine Arts, four volumes in 1831-32. Humorous art also flourished in journals like The Comic Magazine (1832-4), The Fancy (1821-6), The Meteor, two volumes in 1841, The New Sporting Magazine, nineteen volumes in 1831-40, Pierce Egan's Life in London and Sporting Guide, 1824-7, afterwards called Bell's Life in London and eventually The Sporting Guide, Ackermann's various projects, such as The Poetical Magazine of 1809 and The Repository of Arts, Literature, Fashions, and Manufactures of 1809-28, The Scourge, a satirical journal to which Cruikshank and Gillray contributed

between 1811 and 1815; and later there came artistic journals like The Germ, which brought artistic propaganda up to a serious level (1850), and The Fine Arts Quarterly, which may be called the first modern art journal of England, and which flourished for four years, between 1863-7.¹⁴¹

Most of these magazines were devoted to reproductions of caricatures or drawings; those of a more literary character published the first art journalism of modern England; three or four undertook to reform British taste and standards. Of these, Arnold's publications are most important. These include the Library of the Fine Arts; or Repertory of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, and Engraving (1831-2) and its successor, the Magazine of the Fine Arts, and Journal of Literature and Science (1833-4). Arnold had three purposes: to discourage false standards of connoisseurship, to show the equal importance of the fine arts with poetry and literature, and to develop popular taste through the right kind of pictures - the historical and anecdotal. Connoisseurship was especially frowned on as a perversion of true cultural standards.

"There is a great deal of nonsense connected with what is called Connoisseurship and the Fine Arts....By what magic this prejudice has been brought about, and is still continued, it is hardly worth while to inquire; for if discovered and pointed out, it would little avail in producing a reformation. A love for the Art will, as in other cases, beget a partiality for the object, and a blindness to its defects; for defects certainly exist, even in the works of the first masters, where

¹⁴¹More complete accounts of this journalistic and domestic art movement will be found in L. Fagan's Engraving in England (London, 1893), Martin Hardie's English Colored Books (London, 1906), Howard L. Levis' A Descriptive Bibliography of the most important Books in the English Language relating to the Art and History of Engraving and the Collecting of Prints (London, 1912), F. Wadmore's Etching in England (London, 1895), and Thomas Wright's History of Caricature and Grotesque in Literature and Art (London, 1865) and Caricature History of the Georges (London, 1868). Further material is in Six Lectures on some Nineteenth Century artists, English and French by William Angus Knight (Chicago, 1909), in Charles S. Ricketts' A Century of Art 1810-1910 (London, 1911), and A. M. Hind's A Short History of Engraving and Etching (London, 1911).

the pictorial license has been carried beyond the bounds of nature or probability; and these defects, under the sanction of style or name, have been handed down and respected as marks of genius and talent, whereas they are but the bravura of the pencil. But as the bravura of intelligence and talent will have something to captivate, it has been often mistaken for excellence in the perverted imagination of the ardent admirers of the Fine Arts. As men acquire a taste for the unnatural and sophisticated in food, - so in painting a liking is generated and the gloomy and smoke-dried tones which time rather than the artist has given to the work."¹⁴²

This "bias in the connoisseur" is held to account for the artificial taste for false art in society; artists, "instead of following Nature, with a fair proportion of the pictorial license, are looking out for strange contortions of the human form, and what is called some magical effect of light and shade, in which neither the eye nor the understanding can take a part."¹⁴³ One remedy for connoisseurship is proposed: the proper functioning of art societies. Although "they have now been established for almost every Art or pursuit that admits of them," they are inefficient.

"The object of particular societies, like that of society itself, is twofold: sociability and production. Man is by nature essentially a social being: he is incapable, with very few exceptions, of solitary happiness, and therefore society is a mutual benefit to all who share in it....Secondly, all productions of at all a complicated or extensive character, can only be effected by cooperation and division of labor. There is this difference, however, between society in the abstract and the formation of specific societies, that in the former case sociability is the principal object, and production only secondary....But in specific societies, it is just the reverse. The direct object of their appointment must be the furtherance of some particular Art or science; or, at least, a definite object of some sort or other: and then the sociability arising from meeting together to discuss it, and from carrying any works in concert, is a subsequent advantage, and only accidental and secondary in the order of time and design, even though it should in reality be the most valuable of the two: just as the direct object of a painter must be the production of a picture, and not the exercise of his hands and eyes in tracing lines and color, although this

¹⁴² Arnold's Library of the Fine Arts; or Repertory of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, and Engraving (London, 1832), Vol. IV, No. 19 (August 1832), 83-4.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 84.

latter may really give him greater pleasure than the sight and possession of the work when it is finished."¹⁴⁴

Any elevation of art to its proper functioning in society must come through a realization of its powers over human nature.

"The power of raising in the human heart the emotions of sublimity and beauty, is a peculiarity which belongs exclusively to nature; but it is not necessary that nature should act upon us directly. The fine arts - poems and poetical descriptions, music, painting, &c. are media through which nature may, and most frequently does, act upon us so as to raise emotions of beauty, and even, though less frequently, of sublimity. Art is judged excellent by those whose ideas of beauty are founded on natural feeling according as it approaches to nature, that is, according as it contrives to delude those whom it caresses into a forgetfulness that they are viewing - not nature, but a reflected image of nature."¹⁴⁵

Painting joins with poetry in giving "us sensations which we should not otherwise experience." It is the duty of both to move man so that "he feels the chastening influence of beauty, and his breast swells with sublimity and grandeur."¹⁴⁶ "Art is the engine by which ideas are forced into other minds by means different from those which nature has assigned us for the purpose.... Formerly man was forced to set out and call upon nature; she is now brought home to his door."¹⁴⁷ Any art which fails in these civilizing purposes is false art: "where the Fine Arts only please from their raising pleasurable sensations or ideas, from their ingenuity, or from particular causes of association, there beauty and sublimity are not felt - there poetry is not."¹⁴⁸

Arnold's anonymous writers, while constantly referring to art as a new means toward social and moral welfare, lay forth no scheme of utilizing it for this purpose. But they stake their

¹⁴⁴Ibid. (New series), Vol. IV, No. 7 (May 1834), 26-7.

¹⁴⁵Ibid. (New series), Vol. III, No. 4 (February 1834), 321-2.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., 323-4.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 325.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., 329.

hope on the popularizing of edifying modes of art, particularly landscape painting, whose five "true types" are set forth in their varying degrees of moral efficacy. These types represent the mixture of tastes still prevalent during the 1830's and 40's.

"The five kinds of true landscape are these. - The Heroic, which ought to excite noble feelings and emotions of greatness rising almost to sublimity: - The Fanciful or Imaginative, which going beyond anything we have on earth, carries us, as it were, into a world of the painter's own creation; though exaggerating nature, it must not yet outrage all probability: - The Classic, which has for its object the raising of pleasing and tranquil feelings and sentiments of admiration: - The Pastoral, which is intended to produce a calmness and complacency, arising from agreeable prospects of rural quietness and repose: - and lastly, The Familiar or Domestic, which, though the lowest of all, is yet supposed to produce in a greater degree than any of the rest, ideas of internal satisfaction and comfort."¹⁴⁹

Perhaps because it inspired "internal satisfaction and comfort" in the nation as well as in the individual, "the Familiar or Domestic" type of painting was destined to become the great popular mode of the Victorian age, outranking even the religious and heroic in its appeal to the common life. Arnold's Magazine and its contemporaries laid the foundations of domestic taste, and hardly a British art periodical of the ensuing century was established without taking the cultivation of that taste as its objective. The representative modern descendant of these journals, The Studio, carries on this tradition: it was founded in 1893 to assist in the "destructive comment on the social order [which] had become a constructive effort towards restoring beauty to its rightful place in the scheme of life," chiefly through the influence of William Morris, while today it still commits itself to encouraging "the production of works of genuine beauty and interest, while pointing out the dangers of a 'modernism' that loses all contact with life."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹Ibid., Vol. III, No. 12 (January, 1832), 18-19.

¹⁵⁰The Studio (London), Vol. CV, No. 481 (April 1933), 207-8, 210.

"Contact with life" was rapidly becoming an obsession in the minds of English artists of the early Nineteenth Century. John Boydell (1719-1804) and Rudolph Ackermann (1764-1834) began the popular trade in prints, drawings, and landscapes which brought art, in cheap reproduction and portfolio, into the English home. Boydell, through exhibitions and itinerant sales, carried picturesque art of the Gilpin and Price model into the byways of English life. "His object was to encourage English painting, as he had encouraged English engraving; and he employed the most eminent artists of his day." Rudolph Ackermann, of German origin, by opening his first print-shop in the Strand in 1795, not only established lithography as a popular art in England, but launched a spectacular series of publications and portfolios which enlisted the services of the most popular painters and caricaturists of the day - William Henry Bunbury, Ryland, Gillray, Rowlandson, Bartolozzi, Bretherton, and Dickinson. The most important of these were The Repository of Arts, Literature, Fashions, Manufactures (1809-28), The Poetical Magazine (1809), which sponsored William Combe and his satires on Gilpin - the tours of Dr. Syntax; a long series of illustrated books on travel, including Views of Cottages and Farm Houses in England and Wales; and most phenomenal of all, The Microcosm of London of 1808, its architectural drawings by Pugin, the figure work by Rowlandson, and the text by Combe, which was the first comprehensive attempt to instigate a critical interest in English architecture, antiquities, and modern taste.¹⁵¹ Illustrational engraving became a feature of many books and

¹⁵¹Cf. Harold Child, "Caricature and the Literature of Sport," CHEL, XIV (Cambridge, 1932), Chapter VI, 234-65; Kenneth Clark, Op. cit., *passim*; The Microcosm of London, or London in Miniature (London, 1808); and the works by Pugin that best illustrate his principles, such as The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture (London, 1855), Contrasts, etc. (London, 1836), and Floriated Ornament (London, 1849).

periodicals after 1800, its greatest encouragement being given by the experiments of Thomas Bewick, the brilliant inventor of the "white-line method," who, on writing his Memoirs also saw that "men of talent are befitted to enlighten, to charm, and to embellish society" and directed his remarkable genius toward the end that "art may long flourish" as a moral and useful guide to Englishmen.¹⁵²

The dissemination of these principles was soon nation-wide, and inevitably the process of vulgarizing art in order to bring it into conformity with English sentiment and patriotic bias was well advanced. In that process Pugin best represents architecture, Wilkie, Girtin, Pyne, and Morris Hunt painting, and Chantry, Woolner, and Thornycroft sculpture. Pugin's prodigious writings form the architectural bible of the Gothic revival. The painters brought into its full flourish the popular taste for moral anecdotes and homilies. The sculptors wrought their rhetorical deities and allegories for the decoration of the new churches, university halls, and parliamentary houses. England was taking on the physical appearance of a nation in which the most ecstatic and whole-souled esthetic religion was flourishing. Carlyle, in Sartor Resartus, taught that it is through symbols that we pass from the visible to the invisible.

"The Infinite is made to blend itself with the finite, to stand visible, and as it were attainable there. By symbols accordingly is man guided and commanded.... It is through symbols that man, consciously or unconsciously, lives, works, and has his being.... Of this sort are all true works of art,"¹⁵³

and in the Latter-Day Pamphlets of 1850 he admitted that "it is to

¹⁵²Memoirs of Thomas Bewick written by Himself 1822-28, with an introduction by Selwyn Image (London, 1924), 220, 216.

¹⁵³Sartor Resartus (London, 1895), Book III, Chapter III, 99.

the Fine Arts that the world's chosen souls do now chiefly take refuge.... Ever must the Fine Arts be, if not religion, yet indissolubly united to it, dependent on it, vitally blended with it as body is with soul."¹⁵⁴ This remark characteristically stamps Carlyle as the mouthpiece of the common English mind, for the indissoluble union of art and religious sentiment was the compromise toward which popular English esthetic tended. To Newman this union was also acceptable, though he attempted to correct the process of vulgarization by holding that the Fine Arts

"are, it is plain, special attendants and handmaids of Religion; but it is equally plain that they are apt to forget their place, and, unless restrained with a firm hand, instead of being servants, will aim at becoming principals."¹⁵⁵

In England this danger was not great. For the greater part of the Nineteenth Century English art could pride itself on expressing, as John Stuart Mill said in The Monthly Repository of 1833, "human feeling, - or character which is only a certain state of feeling grown habitual."¹⁵⁶ The character of Victorian England was, at the center, fixed in domestic sentiment, religious pietism, and patriotic pride. These became both the motive forces behind British art and the claims of art on the common mind, during the development of the great popular movement that culminated in the work of Ruskin, the Pre-Raphaelites, and their followers.

¹⁵⁴Latter Day Pamphlets (London, 1895), 123.

¹⁵⁵On the Scope and Nature of University Education (London, Everyman's Library, 1920), 69.

¹⁵⁶Reprinted in Dissertations and Discussions: Political, Philosophical, and Historical (Boston, 1864), "Thoughts on Poetry and its Varieties," 89-121; cf. 101.

